

1793 AND 1853,

IN

THREE LETTERS.

BY

RICHARD COBDEN, Esq., M.P.

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"The passions were excited ; democratic ambition was awakened ; the desire of power under the name of Reform was rapidly gaining ground among the middle ranks, and the institutions of the country were threatened with an overthrow as violent as that which had recently taken place in the French monarchy. In these circumstances, the only mode of checking the evil was by engaging in a foreign contest, by drawing off the ardent spirits into active service, and, in lieu of the modern desire for innovation, rousing the ancient gallantry of the British nation."—ALISON, vol. iv., p. 7.

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1793 AND 1853.

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LETTER I.

*Mr. Cobden to the Reverend —*

December, 1852.

My dear Sir,—Accept my thanks for your kindness in forwarding me a copy of your Sermon upon the death of the Duke of Wellington. I am glad to observe, that, like nearly all the commentators upon the achievements of the great warrior, you think it necessary to assume the fact that the war of the French Revolution was on our side defensive in its origin, and had for its object the vindication of the rights and liberties of mankind. A word or two upon that question by and bye. But let us at least rejoice, that, thanks to the progress of the spirit of Christianity, we have so far improved upon the age of Froissart, as no longer to lavish our admiration upon warriors, regardless of the cause to which they may devote themselves. It is not enough now that a soldier possesses that courage which Gibbon designates “the cheapest and most common quality of human nature,” and which a still greater authority has declared to be the attribute of all men; he must be *morally* right, or he fights without our sympathy—he must present better title-deeds than the record of his exploits, written in blood with the point of the sword, before he can lay claim to our reverence or admiration. This, at least, is the doctrine now professed; and the profession of such a faith, even if our works do not quite correspond, is an act of homage to an advanced civilization.

The Sermon with which you have favoured me, and which is, I presume, but one of many thousands written in the same spirit, takes still higher ground; it looks forward to the time when the religion of Christ shall have so far prevailed over the wickedness of this world, that men will “beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.” In the meantime, it condemns all war, excepting that which is strictly defensive, and waged in behalf of the dearest interests of humanity; it professes no sympathy for warriors, no admiration for the profession of arms, and sees less glory in the achievements of the most successful soldier than in the calm endurance of the Christian martyr, or the heroism of him who first ventures, alone and unarmed, as the ambassador of Jesus Christ among the heathen. “But,” says the Sermon, “an occasion may undoubtedly arise when a resort to arms is necessary to rescue the nations of Europe from a tyrant who has trodden their liberties under foot. At such times God has never failed to raise up an instrument to accomplish the good work: such an occasion undoubtedly was the usurpation of Napoleon, and his deadly hostility to this country, and such an instrument was the Duke of Wellington.”

It is impossible to deny that the last extract gives expression to the opinion of the majority of the people of this country,—or at least to a majority of those who form opinions upon such matters,—as to the origin of the last war.

If we were discussing the wars of the Heptarchy, the question would not, as Milton has truly observed, deserve more consideration at our hands than a battle of kites and crows. But the impression that exists in the public mind respecting the

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\*“I believe every man is brave.”—*Duke of Wellington, House of Lords, June 15, 1852.*

origin and history of the last French war may affect the question of peace or war for the future; it is already giving a character to our policy towards the government and people of France. There is a prevalent and active belief among us that that war arose from an unprovoked and unjust attack made upon us; that we were desirous of peace, but were forced into hostilities; that in spite of our pacific intentions, our shores were menaced with a French invasion; and that such having been our fate, in spite of all our efforts to avoid a rupture, what so natural as to expect a like treatment from the same quarter in future? and, as a rational deduction from these premises, we call for an increase of our "national defences."

Now, so far is this from being a true statement of the case, it is, I regret to say, the very opposite of the truth. I do not hesitate to affirm that nothing was ever more conclusively proved by evidence in a court of law than the fact, resting upon historical documents and official acts, that England was the aggressor in the last French war. It is not enough to say that France did not provoke hostilities. She all but went down on her knees (if I may apply such a phrase to a nation) to avert a rupture with this country. Take one broad fact in illustration of the conduct of the two countries. On the news of the insurrection in Paris, on the 10th of August, 1792, reaching this country, our ambassador was immediately recalled—not on the ground that any insult or slight had been offered to him, but on the plea, as stated in the instructions transmitted to him by our foreign minister, a copy of which was presented to Parliament, that the King of France having been deprived of his authority, the credentials under which our ambassador had hitherto acted were no longer available; and at the same time we gave the French ambassador at London notice that he would no longer be officially recognised by our government, but could remain in England only in a private capacity. How far the judgment of the present age sanctions the course our government pursued on that occasion may be known by comparing our conduct then with the policy we adopted in 1848, when our ambassador at Paris found no difficulty, after the flight of Louis Philippe, in procuring fresh credentials to the French Republic, and remaining at his post during all the successive changes of rulers, and when our own government hastened to receive the ambassador of France, although he was no longer accredited from a crowned head.

But France being in 1792 already involved in a war with Austria and Prussia, whose armies were marching upon her frontiers, and menaced at the same time by Russia, Sweden, Spain, and Sardinia, being in fact assailed openly or covertly by all the despotic powers of the Continent, nothing was so much to be dreaded by her as a maritime war with England, for which, owing to the neglected state of her navy, she was wholly unprepared.\* By the Treaty of 1786, which then regulated the intercourse of the two countries, it was stipulated that the recalling or sending away their respective ambassadors or ministers should be deemed to be equivalent to a declaration of war between the two countries. Instead of seizing the opportunity of a rupture afforded by the conduct of England, the French government redoubled their efforts to maintain peace. Their ambassador remained in London from August till January following, in his private capacity, holding frequent correspondence with our foreign minister, Lord Grenville, submitting to any condition, however humiliating, in order to procure a hearing, and not even resenting the indignity of having had two of his letters returned to him, one of them through the medium of a clerk in the Foreign Office. At length, upon the receipt of the intelligence of the execution of Louis XVI. the French ambassador received, on the 24th January, 1793, from Lord Grenville, an order of the Privy Council peremptorily requiring him to leave the kingdom in eight days.

The sole ground alleged by the British government for this step was the execution of the French King. England,† which had 140 years before been the first to set the example to Europe of decapitating a monarch—England, which, as is observed by

\* England had, in 1792, 153 ships of the line; and France, 86.—*James's Naval History.*

† The Marquis of Lansdowne, speaking of the probable execution of the King of France, said,

"Such a king was not a fit object for punishment, and to screen him from it every nation ought to interpose its good offices; but England, above all, was bound to do so, because he had reason to believe that what had encouraged the French to bring him to trial was the precedent established by England the unfortunate and disgraceful case of Charles I."—*December 21, 1792.*

Madame de Stael, has dethroned, banished, and executed more kings than all the rest of Europe, was suddenly seized with so great a horror for regicides as to be unable to tolerate the presence of the French ambassador!

The war which followed is said by the Sermon before me to have been in defence of the liberties of Europe. Where are they? *Circumspice!*—I can only say that I have sought for them from Cadiz to Moscow without having been so fortunate as to find them. When shall we be proof against the transparent appeal to our vanity involved in the "liberties-of-Europe" argument? We never had forty thousand British troops engaged on one field of battle on the Continent during the whole war. Yet we are taught to believe that the nations of Europe, numbering nearly two hundred millions, owe their liberty to our prowess! If so, no better proof could be given that they are not worthy of freedom.

But, in truth, the originators of the war never pretended that they were fighting for the liberties of the people anywhere. Their avowed object was to sustain the old governments of Europe. The advocates of the war were not the friends of popular freedom even at home. The liberal party were ranged on the side of peace—Lansdowne, Bedford, and Lauderdale, in the Lords, and Fox, Sheridan, and Grey, in the Commons were the strenuous opponents of the war. They were sustained out of doors by a small minority of intelligent men, who saw through the arts by which the war was rendered popular. But (and it is a mournful fact) the advocates of peace were clamoured down, their persons and property left insecure, and even their families exposed to outrage at the hands of the populace. Yes, the whole truth must be told, for we require it to be known, as some safeguard against a repetition of the same scenes; the mass of the people, then wholly uneducated, were instigated to join in the cry for war against France. It is equally true, and must be remembered, that when the war had been carried on for two years only, and when its effects had been felt, in the high price of food, diminished employment, and the consequent sufferings of the working classes, crowds of people surrounded the King's carriage, as he proceeded to the Houses of Parliament, shouting, "Bread, bread! peace, peace!"

But, to revert to the question of the merits of the last French war. The assumption put forth in the Sermon, that we were engaged in a strictly defensive war is, I regret to say, historically untrue. If you will examine the proofs, as they exist in the unchangeable public records, you will be satisfied of this. And let us not forget that our history will ultimately be submitted to the judgment of a tribunal, over which Englishmen will exercise no influence beyond that which is derived from the truth and justice of their cause, and from whose decision there will be no appeal. I allude, of course, to the collective wisdom and moral sense of future generations of men. In the case before us, however, not only are we constrained, by the evidence of facts, to confess that we were engaged in an aggressive war, but the multiplied avowals and confessions of its authors and partisans themselves leave no room to doubt that they entered upon it to put down *opinions* by physical force—one of the worst, if not the very worst, of motives with which a people can embark in war. The question, then, is, shall we, in estimating the glory of the general who commands in such a war, take into account the antecedent merits of the war itself? The question is answered by the Sermon before me, and by every other writer upon the subject, professing to be under the influence of Christian principles; they all assume, as the condition precedent, that England was engaged in a defensive war.

There are two ways of judging the merits of a soldier; the one, by regarding solely his genius as a commander, excluding all considerations of the justice of the cause for which he fights. This is the ancient mode of dealing with the subject, and is still followed by professional men, and others of easy consciences in such matters. These critics will, for example, recognise a higher title to glory, in the career of Suwarrow than in that of Kosciusko, because the former gained the greater number of important victories.

There is another and more modern school of commentators, which professes to withhold its admiration from the deeds of the military hero, unless they be performed in defence of justice and humanity. With these the patriot Pole is greater than the Russian general, because his cause was just, he having been obviously engaged in a



defensive contest, and contending, too, for the dearest rights of home, family, and country.

Now, the condition which I think we may fairly impose upon the latter description of judges is, that they take the needful trouble to inform themselves of the merits of the cause in hand, so as to be competent to give a conscientious judgment upon it. In the case of the Duke of Wellington, the wars which he carried on with so much ability and success on the Continent, were in their character precisely the opposite of that upon which the Sermon ought, according to its own principle, to invoke the approbation of Heaven.

The Duke himself did not evidently recognize the responsibility of the commander for the moral character of his campaigns. His theory of "duty" gave him military absolution, and separated most completely the man from the soldier.

Some of the Duke's biographers have hardly done him justice, in the sense in which they have eulogised him for the strict performance of his duty. Nor have they acted with more fairness towards their countrymen, for, by implication, they would lead us to infer that it is an exception to the rule when an Englishman does his duty. In the vulgar meaning they have attached to this trait in his character, they have lowered him to the level of the humblest labourer who does his duty for weekly wages. *Duty* with the Duke meant something more. It was a professional principle,—the military code expressed in one word. He was always subordinate to some higher authority, and acted from an impulse imparted from without; just as an army surrenders will, reason, and conscience to some one who exercises all these powers in its behalf. Sometimes it was the Queen; sometimes the public service; or the apprehension of a civil war; or a famine, which changed his course, and induced him to take up a new position; but reason, or conscience, or will, seemed to have no more to do in the matter than in the manœuvres of an army. We did not know to his death what were the Duke's convictions upon Free Trade, Reform, or Catholic Emancipation. In his public capacity he never seemed to ask himself—what *ought* I to do? but what *must* I do? This principle of subordination, which is the very essence of military discipline, is at the same time the weak part and blot of the system. It deprives us of the man, and gives us instead a machine; and not a self-acting machine, but one requiring power of some description to move it. The best that can be said of it is, that when honestly adhered to, as in the case of the Duke, it protects us against the attempts of individual selfishness or ambition. He would never have betrayed his trust, so long as he could find a power to whom he was responsible. *That* was the only point upon which he could have ever felt any difficulty. Had he been, like Monk, in the command of an army in times of political confusion, he would have gone to London to discover the legal heir to his "duty," whether it was the son of the Protector, or the remains of the Rump Parliament; but he would never have dreamed of selling himself to a Pretender, even had he been the son of a king. Should the time ever come (which Heaven forbid!) when the work which the Duke achieved needs to be repeated, it is not likely that there will be found one who will surpass him in the ability, courage, honesty, and perseverance which he brought to the accomplishment of the task. But amongst all his high merits—and they place him in dignity and moral worth immeasurably above Marlborough or even Nelson—he would have been probably the last to have claimed for himself the title of the champion of the liberties of any people. No attentive reader of his dispatches will fall into any such delusion as to his own views of his mission to the Peninsula. Or if any doubt still remain, let him consult the classic pages of Napier.

Let me only refer you to the accompanying extracts from the *History of the Peninsular War*:—

"But the occult source of most of these difficulties is to be found in the inconsistent attempts of the British Cabinet to uphold national independence with internal slavery against foreign aggression, with an ameliorated government. The clergy, who led the mass of the people, clung to the English, because they supported aristocracy and church domination. \* \* \* \* The English ministers hating Napoleon, not because he was the enemy of England, but because he was the champion of equality, cared not for Spain unless her people were enslaved. They were willing enough to use a liberal Cortes to defeat Napoleon, but they also desired to put down that Cortes by the aid of the clergy, and of the bigoted part of the people."—Vol. iv. p. 253.

"It was some time before the church and aristocratic party discovered that the secret policy of England was the same as their own. It was so, however, even to the upholding of the Inquisition, which it was ridiculously asserted had become objectionable only in name."—Vol. iv. p. 350.

I could, also, refer you to another instructive passage (vol. iii. p. 271), telling us, amongst other things, that the "educated classes of Spain shrunk from the British government's known hostility to all free institutions." But I have carried my letter already to an unreasonable length, and so I conclude.—Yours faithfully,

To the Rev. —————

R. COBDEN.

## LETTER II.

*Mr. Cobden to the Reverend ———*

December, 1852

My dear Sir,—You ask me to direct you to the best sources of information for those particulars of the origin of the French war to which I briefly alluded in my last letter. What an illustration does this afford of our habitual neglect of the most important part of history,—namely, that which refers to our own country, and more immediately affects the destinies of the generation to which we belong! If *you* feel at a loss for the facts necessary for forming a judgment upon the events of the last century, how much more inaccessible must that knowledge be to the mass of the people! In truth, modern English history is a tabooed study in our common schools, and the young men of our Universities acquire a far more accurate knowledge of the origin and progress of the Punic and Peloponnesian wars, than of the wars of the French Revolution.

The best record of facts, and especially of State papers, referring to our modern history is to be found in the *Annual Register*. These materials have been digested by several writers. The *Pictorial History of England* is not conveniently arranged for reference; and, although the facts are carefully given, the opinions, with reference to the events in question, have a strong Tory bias. The earliest and latest periods of this history are done in a liberal and enlightened spirit; but that portion which embraces the American and French revolutions fell somehow under the control of politicians of a more contracted and bigoted school. Alison, of whose views and principles I shall not be expected to approve, has given the best narrative of the events which followed the French Revolution down to the close of the war. His work, which has passed through many editions, is admirably arranged for reference. Scott's *Life of Napoleon* is the most readable book upon the subject, but not the most reliable for facts and figures.

But if you would really understand the motives with which we embarked upon the last French war, you must turn to Hansard, and read the debates in both Houses of Parliament upon the subject from 1791 to 1796. This has been with me a favourite amusement; and I have culled many extracts which are within reach. Shall I put them together for you? They may probably be of use beyond the purposes of a private letter. But there is one condition for which I will stipulate. There must be a very precise and accurate attention to dates, in order to understand the subject in hand. Banish from your mind all vague floating ideas arising out of a confusion of events extending over the twenty-two years of war. Our business lies with the interval from 1789, when the Constituent Assembly of France met, till 1793, when war commenced between England and France. Bear in mind we are now merely investigating the origin and cause of the rupture between the two countries.

The ten years from the close of the American war in 1783 to the commencement of the war with France in 1793, was a period of remarkable prosperity. To the astonishment of all parties, the separation of the American Colonies, which had been dreaded as the signal for our national ruin, was followed by an increased commercial intercourse with the mother country. The mechanical inventions connected with the cotton trade and other manufactures, and the recent improvement in the steam engine, were adding rapidly to our powers of production; and

the consequent demand for labour, and accumulation of capital, diffused general comfort and well-being throughout the land. Such a state of things always tends to produce political contentment, and never were the people of this country less disposed to seek for reforms, still less to think of revolution, than when the attention of Europe was first drawn to the proceedings of the Constituent Assembly of France in 1789. The startling reforms effected by that body, and the captivating appeals to first principles made by its orators, soon attracted the sympathies of a certain class of philosophical reformers in this country, who, followed by a few of the more intelligent and speculative amongst the artisan class in the towns, began to take an active interest in French politics. Amongst the most influential of the leaders of this party were Doctor Price and Doctor Priestley, and the dissenters generally were ranked amongst their adherents. But the great mass of the population were strongly, almost fanatically on the side of the church, which was, of course, opposed to the doctrines of the French Assembly; the spirit of hostility to dissenters broke forth in many parts of the country, and in Birmingham, and other manufacturing places, it led to riots, and a considerable destruction of property. "It was not," said Mr. Fox,\* "in his opinion, a republican spirit that we had to dread in this country; there was no tincture of republicanism in the country. If there was any prevailing tendency to riot, it was on the other side. It was the high church spirit, and an indisposition to all reform, which marked more than anything else the temper of the times."

Such was the state of the public mind when Mr. Burke published his celebrated *Reflections on the French Revolution*, a work which produced an instant and most powerful effect not only in England, but upon the governing classes on the Continent. This production was given to the world in 1790—the date is all important; for bear in mind that the Constituent Assembly had then been sitting for a year only; that its labours had been directed to the effecting of reforms compatible with the preservation of a limited monarchy; and that such men as Lafayette and Necker had been taking a lead in its deliberations. Do not confound in your mind the proceedings of this body with those of the Legislative Assembly which succeeded to it the next year; or the National Convention, which followed the year after. Do not disturb your fancy with thoughts of the Reign of Terror: that did not begin till four years later. Burke's great philippic contains no complaint of the Constituent Assembly having interfered with us, or meditated forcing its reforms upon other countries. It gives utterance to no suspicion of a warlike tendency on the side of the French. On the contrary, the author of the *Reflections*, in a speech upon the army estimates in the House of Commons, on the 9th of February of this year (1790) declared that "the French army was rendered an army for every other purpose than that of defence;" describing the French soldiers "as base hireling mutineers, and mercenary sordid deserters, wholly destitute of any honourable principle;" alleging on the same occasion, "that France is at this time in a political light to be considered as expunged out of the system of Europe;" and he asserted that the French "had done their business for us as rivals in a way in which twenty Ramilles or Blenheims could never have done it."

What then was the ground on which he assailed the French government with a force of invective that drew from Fox, six years later, the following tribute to its fatal influence?

"In a most masterly performance, he has charmed all the world with the brilliancy of his genius, fascinated the country with the powers of his eloquence, and, in as far as that cause went to produce this effect, plunged the country into all the calamities consequent upon war. I admire the genius of the man, and I admit the integrity and usefulness of his long public life; I cannot, however, but lament that his talents, when, in my opinion, they were directed most beneficially to the interest of his country, produced very little effect; and when he espoused sentiments different from those which I hold to be wise and expedient, that his exertions should have been crowned with a success that I deplore."

Read this famous performance again; and then, having freed your mind from the effects of its gorgeous imagery and fascinating style, ask yourself what grounds it

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\* House of Commons, May 25, 1792. All the speeches from which I have quoted were delivered in Parliament, and the quotations are from Hansard.



affords, what facts it contains to justify even an angry remonstrance, still less to lead to a war. From beginning to end it is an indictment against the representatives of the French people, for having presumed to pursue a course, in a strictly domestic matter, contrary to what Mr. Burke and the English, who are assumed to be infallible judges, held to be the wisest policy. Everything is brought to the test of our practice, and condemned or approved in proportion as it is in opposition to, or in harmony with, British example. The Constituent Assembly is charged with robbery, usurpation, imposture, cheating, violence, and tyranny, for presuming to abolish the law of primogeniture, or appropriate their church lands to secular purposes, making religion a charge upon the state; or limit to a greater degree than ourselves the prerogative of the crown; or establish universal suffrage as the basis of their representation; changes which, however unsuitable they may have been to the habits and dispositions of Englishmen, were yet such as have not been found incompatible with the prosperity of the people of America, and which, to a large extent, are practically applied in the government of our own colonies.

But let us see what was done besides by this Assembly. Liberty of religious worship to its fullest extent was secured; torture abolished; trial by jury and publicity of courts of law were established; *lettres-de-cachet* abolished; the nobles and clergy made liable, in common with other classes, to taxation; the most oppressive imposts, such as those on salt, tobacco, the *taille*, &c. suppressed; the feudal privileges of the nobles extinguished; access to the superior ranks of the army, heretofore monopolized by the privileged class, made free to all; and the same rule applied to all civil employments.

I dwell on these particulars, because it was from this sweeping list of reforms, effected by the Constituent Assembly of France, and the sympathy which they excited amongst the more active and intelligent of our liberal politicians, that the war between the two countries really sprung. It was not to put down the Reign of Terror that we entered upon hostilities. That would have been no legitimate object for a war. But the Reign of Terror did not commence till nearly a year after the war began. Our indignation was not excited to blows in 1793 by the madness which afterwards possessed the National Convention, and which manifested itself in the alteration of the Calendar, the abolition of Christianity, and, finally, in the deposition of the Deity himself. These were the consequences, not the causes of war. No; the war was entered upon to prevent the contagion of those principles which were put forth in such captivating terms in 1789 and 1790 by the Constituent Assembly of France. The ruling class in England took alarm at a revolution going on in a neighbouring state, where the governing body had abolished all hereditary titles, appropriated the church lands to state purposes, and decreed universal suffrage as the basis of the representative system. "If," says Alison,\* "the changes in France were regarded with favour by one, they were looked on with utter horror by another class of the community. The majority of the aristocratic body, all the adherents of the church, all the holders of office under the monarchy, in general the great bulk of the opulent ranks of society, beheld them with apprehension or aversion."

From this moment, the friends and opponents of the French Revolution formed themselves into opposing parties, whose conduct, says Sir W. Scott,† resembled that of rival factions at a play, who hiss and applaud the actors on the stage as much from party spirit as from real critical judgment; while every instant increases the probability that they will try the question by actual force. Strange that to neither party should it have occurred, that to the twenty-four millions of Frenchmen interested in the issue, might be left the task of framing their own government, without the intervention of the people of England; and that the circumstance of a peculiar form of constitution having been found suitable for one country, did not necessarily prove that it would be acceptable to the other!

But the Revolution in France produced a more decisive impression on the despotic powers of the Continent. As soon as the democratic measures of the Constituent Assembly were accomplished, and the powers of the King made subordinate to the

\* Vol. iii., p. 108.

† Life of Napoleon, ch. vii.

will of the representative body, the neighbouring potentates took the alarm, and began to concert measures for enabling Louis XVI. to recover at least a part of his lost prerogatives. The Emperor of Germany, Leopold, the most able and enlightened sovereign of Europe, who, as Grand Duke of Tuscany, had carried out many of those great economical and legal reforms which constitute the pride of modern statesmen, took the lead in these unwarrantable acts of intervention in the affairs of the French people. His relationship to the Queen of Louis XVI. (for they were both the offspring of Maria Theresa) afforded, however, an amiable plea for his conduct, which was not shared by his royal confederates. Almost every crowned head on the Continent was now covertly, or openly, conspiring against the principle of self-government in France; and even the Sovereign of England, under the title of Elector of Hanover, was supposed to be represented at some of their private conferences. The result was the famous declaration of Pilnitz, put forth in the names of the Emperor and the King of Prussia, in which they declare conjointly, "That they consider the situation of the King of France as a matter of common interest to all the European Sovereigns. They hope that the reality of that interest will be duly appreciated by the other powers, whose assistance they will invoke, and that in consequence they will not decline to employ their forces conjointly with their Majesties, in order to put the King of France in a situation to lay the foundation of a monarchical government, conformable alike to the rights of sovereigns and the well-being of the French nation. In that case, the Emperor and King are resolved to act promptly with the forces necessary to attain their common end. In the meantime, they will give the requisite orders for their troops to hold themselves in immediate readiness for active service."

It is all-important to observe the date of this Declaration—August 27, 1791—for upon the date depends entirely the question whether France or the Allied Powers were the authors and instigators of the war. Up to this period the French were wholly engrossed in their own internal reforms, and had not given the slightest ground for suspecting that they meditated an act of hostility against any foreign power. "Whilst employed in the extension and security of her liberties," says Mr. Baines, in his able and candid history of these events, "amidst the struggle with a reluctant monarch, a discontented priesthood, and a hostile nobility, she was menaced at the same time by a sudden and portentous combination of the two great military states—Prussia, under the dominion of Frederic William, and Austria, under the Emperor Leopold, brother to Maria Antoinette, Queen of France." The French were wholly unprepared for war. Not only were their finances in a ruinous state; the army had fallen into disorder. For whilst the common soldiers were enthusiastic partisans of the revolution, the officers, who were all of the class of nobles, were often its violent enemies, and many of them had fled the kingdom. Great as was at that time the dread of French principles, no foreign power felt any fear of the physical force of France; for everybody shared the opinion of Burke, that that country had reduced itself to a state of abject weakness by its revolutionary excesses.

But the best proof that the French government had not given any good ground of offence to foreign powers, is to be found in the fact that the declaration of the Allied Sovereigns contains no complaint of the kind. Their sole object, as avowed by them in this and subsequent manifestoes, was to restore the King to the prerogatives of which he had been deprived by his people. It needs no argument now to prove that this threat of an armed intervention in the internal affairs of France was tantamount to a declaration of war. Compare this conduct of the despotic powers in 1791 with the abstinence from all interference—nay, the punctilious disavowal of all right to interfere—in the domestic affairs of France in 1848, when the changes in the government of that country were of a far more sudden and startling character than those which had taken place at the time of the Declaration of Pilnitz.

These proceedings of the Allied Powers were not sufficient to divert the French from the all-absorbing domestic struggle in which they were involved. No acts of hostility immediately followed. The wise Leopold, who wished to support the authority of the King of France by other means than war, now exerted himself to assemble a congress of all the great powers of Europe, with a view to agree to a form of government for France. Whilst busying himself with this scheme, death put a

sudden close to his reign, and his less prudent and pacific successor soon brought matters to extremities. In the meantime, Russia, Sweden, Sardinia, and Spain, assumed a more and more hostile attitude towards France. It was, however, from the side of Germany, where twenty thousand emigrant French nobles were menacing their native country with invasion, that the chief danger was apprehended; and it was to the Emperor that the French government addressed itself for a categorical explanation of its intentions. The Note in answer demanded the re-establishment of the French monarchy on the basis which had been rejected by the nation in 1789;

— it required the restoration of the church lands, part of which had been sold; and it ignored all that had been done by the Constituent Assembly during the last two years. But I will give a description of the Note by one whose leaning to the French will not be suspected: \*—"The demands of the Austrian Court went now, when fully explained, so far back upon the Revolution, that a peace negotiated upon such terms must have laid France and all its various parties (with the exception of a few of the First Assembly) at the foot of the sovereign, and, what might be more dangerous, at the mercy of the restored emigrants." The consequences of this note may be described in the language of the same author:—"The Legislative Assembly received these extravagant terms as an insult on the national dignity; and the King, whatever might be his sentiments as an individual, could not, on this occasion, dispense with the duty his office as constitutional monarch imposed on him. Louis, therefore, had the melancholy task of proposing† to an Assembly, filled with the enemies of his throne and person, a declaration of war against his brother-in-law,‡ the Emperor."

Thus began a war which, if not the longest, was the bloodiest and most costly that ever afflicted mankind. Whatever faults or crimes may be fairly chargeable upon the French nation for the excesses and cruelties of the Revolution up to this time (April, 1792), it cannot be with justice made responsible for the commencement of the war. What *might* have happened if foreign governments had abstained from all interference, has frequently been a topic of speculation and hypothetical prophecy with those who, whilst admitting that the French were not the aggressors, are yet unwilling to allow that war could have been avoided. If such speculations were worth pursuing, surely the experience we have since had in France and other countries would lead to the conclusion that a nation, if unmolested from without, is never so little prone to meddle with its neighbours as when involved in the difficulties, dangers, and embarrassments of an internal revolution. But we have to deal with facts and experience and they prove that in the case before us France was the aggrieved and not the aggressive party.

It is true that France was the first to *declare* war; which is a proof that she had more respect for the usages and laws of nations than her enemies; for they were making formidable preparations for an invasion, under the plea of restoring order, and re-establishing the King on his throne, with the view, as they pretended, of benefiting the French people. They would not have declared war against France, but against the oppressors of France, as they chose to term the Legislative Assembly. The resistance they met with proved that they were opposed by the whole French nation; and, therefore, the only plea put forth in their justification fails them in the hands of the historian.

On the 25th July following, the Duke of Brunswick, when on the eve of invading France, with an army of eighty thousand Austrian and Prussian troops, and a formidable band of emigrant French nobles, issued a manifesto, in the name of Austria and Prussia, in which he states his conviction that "the majority of the inhabitants of France wait with impatience the moment when succour shall arrive, to declare themselves openly against the odious enterprises of their oppressors." To afford a full knowledge of the objects of the invaders, and of the atrocious spirit which animated them, I give the following extract from the 8th article of this manifesto:—

"The city of Paris and all its inhabitants, without distinction, shall be called upon to submit instantly, and without delay, to the King, to set that prince at full liberty, and to ensure to him and

\* Scott's Napoleon.

† 20th April, 1792.

‡ With his too common inaccuracy, the author has overlooked the previous death of Leopold.

all the royal persons that inviolability and respect which are due, by the laws of nature and of all nations, to sovereigns; their Imperial and Royal Majesties making personally responsible for all events, on pain of losing their heads, pursuant to military trials, without hopes of pardon, all the members of the National Assembly, of the Departments, of the Districts, of the Municipality, and of the National Guards of Paris, Justices of the Peace, and others whom it may concern. And their Imperial and Royal Majesties further declare, on the faith and word of Emperor and King, that if the palace of the Tuilleries be forced or insulted, if the least violence be offered, the least outrage done, their Majesties, the King, the Queen, and the Royal Family, if they be not immediately placed in safety, and set at liberty, they will inflict on those who shall deserve it the most exemplary and ever memorable avenging punishment, *by giving up the city of Paris to military execution, and exposing it to total destruction.*"

In an additional declaration, published ten days later, after declaring that he makes no alteration in the 8th article of the former manifesto, he adds, in case the King, Queen, or any other member of the Royal Family should be carried off by any of the factions, that "all the places and towns whatsoever, which shall not have opposed their passage, and shall not have stopped their proceeding, *shall incur the same punishments as those inflicted on the inhabitants of Paris*; and the route which shall be taken by those who carry off the King and the Royal Family, shall be marked with a series of exemplary punishments, justly due to the authors and abettors of crimes for which there is no remission."

Let it be borne in mind that these proclamations, worthy of Timour or Attila, were issued at a moment when Louis XVI. was still exercising the functions of a constitutional sovereign in France; for it was not till the 10th of August that his palace was assailed by the armed populace, and he and his family were consigned to a prison. And, here, in taking leave of the belligerents on the Continent—for my task is confined to the investigation of the origin, and not the progress of the war—let it be observed that there is not a writer, whether French or English, who, in recording historically the dismal catalogue of crimes which from this time for a period of three years disgraced the domestic annals of France, does not attribute the ferocity of the people, and the atrocities committed by them, in a large degree, to the proclamation of the Duke of Brunswick, and the subsequent invasion of the French territory.

There is nothing so certain to extinguish the magnanimity, which is the natural attribute of great multitudes of men, conscious of their strength, as the suspicion of treachery on the part of those to whom they are opposed. It is under the excitement of this passion that the most terrible sacrifices to popular vengeance have been made. The names of De Witt and Artevelde are remarkable among the victims to popular suspicion. But never was this feeling excited to such a state of frenzy as in Paris on the first news of the successes of the invading armies. The King, the nobility, the clergy, and all the opulent classes were suspected of being in correspondence with the foreigner; and the terrors of the populace pictured the Austrians already at the gates of Paris, and the royalists pouring forth to welcome them and to offer their aid in the vengeance which was to follow. It was under this impression of treachery that the horrible massacre of political prisoners on the 2nd of September took place.

But I prefer to give the testimony of a writer, who will have little sympathy, probably, for the main argument of this letter:—

"No doubt," says Alison,\* "can now exist that the interference of the allies augmented the horrors and added to the duration of the Revolution. All its bloodiest excesses were committed during or after an alarming, but unsuccessful invasion by the allied forces. The massacres of September 2nd were perpetrated when the public mind was excited to the highest degree by the near approach of the Duke of Brunswick; and the worst days of the government of Robespierre were immediately after the defection of Dumourier, and the battle of Nerwilde threatened the rule of the Jacobins with destruction. Nothing but a sense of public danger could have united the factions who then strove with so much exasperation against each other; the peril of France, alone, could have induced the people to submit to the sanguinary rule which so long desolated its plains. The Jacobins maintained their ascendancy by constantly representing their cause as that of national independence, and by stigmatising their enemies as the enemies of the country; and the patriots wept and suffered in silence, lest by resistance they should weaken the state, and cause France to be erased from among the nations."

If facts have any logical bearing upon human affairs, I think I have shewn that

the war was provoked by the Allied Powers. Let us now turn to the part performed by England in the events which followed.

From the moment of the appearance of Burke's famous *Reflections* in 1790, the character, objects, and proceedings of the Constituent Assembly occupied, every day, more intensely the attention of the English public. The country took sides, and politicians attacked or defended, according to their own views and aspirations, the conduct of the leaders of the revolution. Not only were the columns of the newspapers occupied with this all-engrossing topic, but the press teemed with pamphlets and volumes in support of, or in opposition to, Burke's production. The most masterly of the latter class was the *Vindiciæ Gallicæ* of Sir James Macintosh, which advocated the fundamental principles of freedom and humanity with a far closer logic, and a style scarcely less attractive than that of his great opponent. By degrees the character of the liberal party, comprising the Whigs and Dissenters, became involved to some extent in the fate of the revolution; and their opponents took care to heap upon them all the odium which attached to the disorders and excesses of the French people. When the Jacobins, as the ultra party were nicknamed, became powerful in France, that detestable name was assigned to the English reformers by their Tory enemies, who, holding, as they did, the stamp of fashion in their hands, could give general currency to their damaging epithets.

But gradually, and almost imperceptibly, a change came over the character of the controversy. In a couple of years the tone of the dominant classes had altered; first, from cold criticism upon the revolution, to fierce invectives, then to menaces, and finally, to the cry for war; until at last the Tories and Liberals, instead of being merely contending commentators upon French politics, were involved in a fierce contest with each other upon the question of peace or war with the government of France. From that time, all that remained of the liberal party, thinned as it was by defection, and headed heroically by Mr. Fox, ranged themselves on the side of peace. "The cry of peace," said Windham\* (Secretary at War), "proceeded from the Jacobin party in this country; and although every one who wished for peace was not a Jacobin, yet every Jacobin wished for peace."

There is every reason to suppose that Pitt† would have individually preferred peace. By a commercial treaty which he had entered into with France, a few years previously, he had greatly extended the trading relations of the two countries, and it is known that he was bent upon some important plans of financial and commercial reform. Upon the meeting of Parliament in 1792, he proposed reduced estimates for our military establishments, and nothing boded the approach of war. The governing class in this country shared the opinions of Mr. Burke as to the powerless condition to which France had reduced herself by her internal convulsion. A veteran army of nearly 100,000 men, under experienced generals, was preparing to invade that country, which, torn by civil strife, with a bankrupt exchequer, and with the court, aristocracy, and clergy secretly favouring the enemy, seemed to offer a certain triumph to its assailants. Little doubt was felt that one campaign would "restore order" to France.

But the Duke of Brunswick's atrocious proclamation had produced upon the French people an effect very different from that which was expected. It is ~~thus~~

\* May 27, 1795.

† "No one more clearly than Mr. Pitt saw the ruinous consequences of the contest into which his new associates, the deserters from the Whig standard, were drawing or were driving him; none so clearly perceived or so highly valued the blessings of peace as the finance minister, who had but the year before accompanied his reduction of the whole national establishment with a picture of our future prosperity almost too glowing even for his great eloquence to attempt. Accordingly, it is well known, nor is it even contradicted by his few surviving friends, that his thoughts were all turned to peace. But the voice of the court was for war; the aristocracy was for war; the country was not disinclined towards war, being just in that state of excitable (though as yet not excited) feeling which is dependent on the government, that is, upon Mr. Pitt, either to calm down into a sufferance of peace, or roused into a vehement desire of hostilities. In these circumstances, the able tactician, whose genius was confined to parliamentary operations, at once perceived that a war must place him at the head of all the power in the state, and, by uniting with him the more aristocratic portion of the Whigs, cripple his adversaries irreparably; and he preferred flinging his country into a contest which he and his great antagonist, by uniting their forces must have prevented; but then he must also have spared with Mr. Fox the power which he was determined to enjoy alone and supreme."—*Brougham's Statesmen of George III.*, series .i., vol. i pp. 77-79.



described by Alison:\* "A unanimous spirit of resistance burst forth in every part of France; the military preparations were redoubled; the ardour of the multitude was raised to the highest pitch. The manifesto of the Allied Powers was regarded as unfolding the real designs of the court and the emigrants. Revolt against the throne appeared the only mode of maintaining their liberties, or preserving their independence; the people of Paris had no choice between victory or death."

The campaign which followed proved disastrous to the invaders; and in September the Duke of Brunswick was in full retreat from the French territory. Soon afterwards Dumourier gained the battle of Jemmappes, and took possession of the Austrian Netherlands. On the Rhine, and the frontier of Savoy, the French armies were also successful.

An instantaneous change of policy now took place in England. The government had looked on in silence, or with merely an occasional protestation of neutrality, whilst the allied armies were preparing to invade, and as everybody believed, to occupy the French territory. But no sooner did the news of French victories arrive than the tone of our ministers instantly changed, and even Pitt, with all his cautiousness, was so thrown off his guard, that he disclosed the true object of the war which followed:—

"Those opinions," said he,† "which the French entertained, were of the most dangerous nature; they were opinions professed by interest, inflamed by passion, propagated by delusion, which their success had carried to the utmost excess, and had contributed to render still more dangerous. For, would the Right Honourable Gentleman tell him that the French opinions received no additional weight from the success of their armies? Was it possible to separate between the progress of their opinions and the success of their armies? It was evident that the one must influence the other, and that the diffusion of their principles must keep pace with the extent of their victories. He was not afraid of the progress of French principles in this country, unless the defence of the country should be previously undermined by the introduction of those principles."

And in the same speech he thus particularises the objects of his solicitude:—

"They had seen, within two or three years, a revolution in France, founded upon principles which were inconsistent with every regular government, which were hostile to hereditary monarchy, to nobility, to all the privileged orders, and to every sort of popular representation, short of that which would give to every individual a voice in the election of representatives."

The militia was now suddenly embodied, and Parliament was summoned to meet on the 13th of December. Before, however, we refer to this, the closing scene of the peace, it is necessary, for a correct understanding of our relations with France, to take a review of the correspondence which was at the same time going on between our foreign secretary and M. Chauvelin, the French ambassador at London. Here, again, we must pay particular attention to dates.‡

The correspondence commences with a letter, dated May 12, 1792, from M. Chauvelin to Lord Grenville, explaining the cause of the war between France and the Emperor, and complaining in the name of the King of the French that the Emperor Leopold had promoted a great conspiracy against France.

On the 18th June, 1792, M. Chauvelin alludes at greater length, in a letter to Lord Grenville, to the coalition formed on the Continent against France, and asks the British government to exert its influence to stop the progress of that confederacy, and especially "to dissuade from all accession to this project all those of the allies of England whom it may be wished to draw into it!"

In reply to this letter, Lord Grenville declines to interfere with the allies of this country, to put an end to the confederacy against France, alleging that "the intervention of his counsels or of his good offices cannot be of use unless they should be

\* Vol. ii., p. 330.

† Jan. 4, 1793.

‡ And here let me give an extract from Scott's *Life of Napoleon*, illustrative of the looseness and inaccuracy with which history is sometimes written. I have explained the errors in italics:—

"Lord Gower, the British ambassador, was recalled from Paris immediately on the King's execution." [*He was recalled on the King's deposition in August, his execution not taking place till January following.*] "The Prince to whom he was sent was no more; and, on the same ground, the French envoy at the Court of St. James, though not dismissed by his Majesty's government, was made acquainted that the ministers no longer considered him as an accredited person." [*The French ambassador was peremptorily ordered to leave this country in eight days, upon the news of the King's death reaching this country.*] And from these inaccurate data he draws the conclusion that we are not the aggressors in the war which immediately followed.

desired by all the parties interested." [In direct contradiction to this, was the following passage in the King's speech, January 31, of this very year, 1792, on opening the session:—"Our intervention has also been employed with a view to promote a pacification between the Empress of Russia and the Porte; and conditions have been agreed upon between us and the former of these powers which we undertook to recommend to the Porte, as the re-establishment of peace on such terms appeared to be, under all the circumstances, a desirable event for the general interests of Europe.]

On the news of the dethronement of the King of France in August, M. Chauvelin received notice, as has been before seen, that he would no longer be recognised by the English government in his official character; and there was an interval of several months, during which the correspondence was suspended. On the 13th December, as before stated, Parliament was hastily assembled: the King's speech announced that the militia had been embodied, and recommended an increase of the army and navy; it complained of the aggressive conduct of the French, and their disregard of the rights of neutral nations. [Not a syllable had been said in disapproval of the conduct of the Allied Powers when they began the unprovoked attack on France, an attack the complete failure of which was now known in England.] The speeches of the ministers and the majority in Parliament, in the debate on the address, were of a most warlike character. On the 27th of December, 1792, after these occurrences (do not, for a moment, lose sight of the dates), M. Chauvelin renews the correspondence with Lord Grenville. He begins by saying that he makes his communication at the request of his own government. After adducing the fact of his having remained in England since August, notwithstanding the recall of our ambassador, Lord Gower, from Paris, as "a proof of the desire the French government had to live on good terms with his Britannic Majesty," he proceeds to complain that "a character of ill-will, to which he is yet unwilling to give credit," has been observable in the measures recently adopted by the British government, and he asks whether France ought to consider England as a neutral power or an enemy. "But in asking from the ministers of his Britannic Majesty a frank and open explanation as to their intentions with regard to France, the Executive Council of the French government is unwilling they should have the smallest remaining doubt as to the disposition of France towards England, and as to its desire of remaining at peace with her: it has even been desirous of answering beforehand all the reproaches which they may be tempted to make in justification of a rupture." He then proceeds to offer explanations upon the three reasons which he surmised might weigh with the English, and lead them "to break with the French Republic." The first has reference to the decree of the National Convention of the 19th November, offering fraternity to all people who wish to recover their liberty; the next, the opening of the Scheldt, consequent upon the conquest of the Austrian Netherlands; and thirdly, the violation of the territory of Holland. With respect to the decree of the 19th November, offering assistance to all people wishing for liberty, he said:—"The National Convention never meant that the French Republic should favour insurrections, should espouse the quarrels of a few seditious persons, or in a word should endeavour to excite disturbances in any neutral or friendly country whatever." He then proceeds to say:—"France ought to and will respect, not only the independence of England, but even those of her allies with whom she is not at war. The undersigned has therefore been charged formally to declare that she will not attack Holland, so long as that power shall on its side confine itself towards her within the bounds of an exact neutrality." He then refers to the only other question, the opening of the Scheldt: "A question irrevocably decided by reason and justice, of small importance in itself, and on which the opinion of England, and perhaps of Holland itself, is sufficiently known to render it difficult to make it seriously the single subject of war."

M. Chauvelin says, in conclusion:—"He hopes that the ministers of his Britannic Majesty will be brought back by the explanations which this note contains, to ideas more favourable to the re-union of the two countries, and that they will not have occasion, for the purpose of returning to them, to consider the terrible responsibility of a declaration of war, which will incontestably be their own work, the consequences of which cannot be otherwise than fatal to the two countries, and to human nature in general, and in which a generous and free people cannot long consent to betray their

own interests, by serving as an auxiliary and a re-inforcement to a tyrannical coalition."

The reply of Lord Grenville, dated December 31, begins in the following haughty fashion:—"I have received, Sir, from you a note, in which, styling yourself minister plenipotentiary of France, you communicate to me, as the King's secretary of state, the instructions which you state to have yourself received from the Executive Council of the French Republic. You are not ignorant, that since the unhappy events of the 10th August, the King has thought proper to suspend all official communication with France." The rest of the letter repels with little ceremony the advances of the French minister, and subjects his pleas and excuses to a cold and incredulous criticism. It reiterates the complaints respecting the decree of the 19th November, the opening of the Scheldt, and the violation of the territory of Holland. "If France," said Lord Grenville, "is really desirous of maintaining friendship and peace with England, she must shew herself disposed to renounce her views of aggression and aggrandisement, and confine herself within her own territory, without insulting other governments, without disturbing their tranquility, or violating their rights." [It would have added much to the force of this remonstrance if a similar tone had been taken a year earlier, when the famous Declaration of Pilnitz was published.]

M. Chauvelin, notwithstanding this repulse, again addresses Lord Grenville, January 7, 1793, bringing under his notice the Alien Bill just introduced into Parliament, and which contained, as he alleged, provisions, so far as French citizens were concerned, inconsistent with the letter and spirit of the treaty of commerce entered into by France and England in 1786; and he concludes by asking to be informed whether, "under the general denomination of foreigners, in the bill on which the Houses are occupied, the government of Great Britain means likewise to include the French?" This letter is returned to the writer by Lord Grenville, the same day, accompanied with a short note, declaring it to be, "totally inadmissible, M. Chauvelin assuming therein a character which is not acknowledged."

Unable to obtain a hearing in his official capacity, M. Chauvelin abandons the former style of his letters, which ran—the undersigned minister plenipotentiary, &c., and now addresses a letter to Lord Grenville, beginning "My Lord," and dropping all allusion to his own diplomatic quality. In this letter, he complains that several vessels in British ports freighted with grain for the French government had been stopped, contrary to law; he states that he has been informed by respectable authorities that the custom-houses had received orders to permit the exportation of foreign wheat to all ports except those of France; and he goes on to say, "I should the first moment of my knowing of it, have waited upon you, my Lord, to be assured from yourself of its certainty or its falsehood, if the determination taken by his Britannic Majesty, in the present circumstance, to break off all communication between the governments of the two countries, had not rendered friendly and open steps the more difficult in proportion as they became the more necessary."

And he adds:—"But I considered, my Lord, that when the question of war or peace arose between two powerful nations, that which manifested the desire of attending to all explanations, that which strove the longest to preserve the last link of union and friendship, was the only one which appeared truly worthy and truly great. I beseech you, my Lord, in the name of public faith, in the name of justice and of humanity, to explain to me facts which I will not characterise, and which the French nation would take for granted by your silence only, or by the refusal of an answer."

Lord Grenville's answer, dated 9th January, 1793, evades the question:—

"I do not know," says he, "in what capacity you address me the letter which I have just received; but in every case it would be necessary to know the resolutions which shall have been taken in France, in consequence of what has already passed, before I can enter into any new explanations, especially with respect to measures founded, in a great degree, on those motives of jealousy and uneasiness which I have already detailed to you."

Nothing daunted, the indefatigable Frenchman renews the correspondence on the 11th. But having resumed the diplomatic style of "the undersigned minister plenipotentiary," his letter, which states that the "French Republic cannot but regard the conduct of the English government as a manifest infraction of the treaty of commerce

concluded between the two powers, and that, consequently, France ceases to consider herself as bound by that treaty, and that she regards it from this moment as broken and annulled," was returned to him by *Mr. Aust*, a clerk, probably, in the Foreign Office, with the following note:—

"*Mr. Aust* is charged to send back to *M. Chauvelin* the enclosed paper received yesterday at the Office for Foreign Affairs."

Next, we have a letter from *M. Chauvelin* to Lord Grenville, written in an unofficial form, dated January 12th, stating that he had just received a messenger from Paris, and soliciting a personal interview; which request is granted, on condition that the communication be put upon paper. On the following day *M. Chauvelin* communicates to Lord Grenville a copy of a paper which he had received from *M. Le Brun*, the foreign minister of France. This despatch contains the strongest expressions of a desire to maintain amicable relations with England. "The sentiments of the French nation towards the English," says the foreign minister of France, "have been manifested during the whole course of the revolution, in so constant, so unanimous a manner, that there cannot remain the smallest doubt of the esteem which it has vowed them, and of its desire of having them for friends." He then proceeds to discuss, at length, the several topics in dispute between the two countries. As respects the obnoxious decree of the 19th November, every effort is made to explain away its offensive meaning, and it is at last admitted that the object contemplated "might, perhaps, be dispensed with by the National Convention, that it was scarcely worth the while to express it, and it did not deserve to be made the object of a particular decree."

Assuming that the British government is satisfied with the declaration made on the part of the French, relative to Holland, the paper proceeds, at length, into the question of the opening of the Scheldt, which is justified by an appeal to the rights of nature and of all the nations of Europe. The Emperor of Germany concluded the treaty for giving the exclusive right of the navigation of the Scheldt to the Dutch without consulting the Belgians. "The Emperor, to secure the possession of the Low Countries, sacrificed, without scruple, the most inviolable of rights." And, further, "France enters into war with the house of Austria, expels it from the Low Countries, and calls back to freedom those people whom the Court of Vienna had devoted to slavery." The paper proceeds to say that France does not aim at the permanent occupation of the Low Countries, and that after the close of the war, if England and Holland still attach some importance to the re-closing of the Scheldt, they may put the affair into a direct negotiation with Belgium. If the Belgians, by any motive whatever, consent to deprive themselves of the navigation of the Scheldt, France will not oppose it."

Lord Grenville, in his reply to this letter (January 18, 1793), begins by saying:—"I have examined, sir, with the greatest attention, the paper which you delivered to me on the 13th of this month. I cannot conceal from you that I have found nothing satisfactory in the result of that note." The rest of the letter is either a repetition of the former complaints, or an attempt to extract fresh sources of dispute from the preceding communication. After the exchange of two other unimportant letters, we come to the *dénouement*. On the 24th January, on the news reaching London of the execution of Louis XVI., Lord Grenville transmits to *M. Chauvelin* the order of the Privy Council, requiring him to leave the country in eight days.

I have given these copious extracts from this most portentous of all diplomatic correspondence, not to exonerate you from the trouble of reading the remainder,—for every word ought to be studied by those who wish to understand the origin of the war, but to enable you to form a correct opinion of the *animus* which influenced the two parties. Contrast the conciliatory, the almost supplicatory tone of the one, with the repulsive and haughty style of the other, and then ask—which was bent upon hostilities, and which on peace? Recollect that these correspondents were the representatives respectively of sixteen millions of British and twenty-four millions of French, and then say whether the insolent *de-haut-en-bas* treatment received by the latter could have been intended for any other purpose but to provoke a war. Observe that the more urgent the Frenchman became in his desire to explain away

the ground of quarrel, the more resolute was the English negotiator to close up the path to reconciliation; forcing upon us the conviction that what the British government really dreaded at that moment was, not the hostility, but the friendship of France.

And, now, a word as to the alleged grounds of the rupture. It must be observed in the first place, that there is no complaint on our part of any hostile act, or even word, being directed against *ourselves*. The bombastic decree\* of the National Convention—one of the midnight declarations of that excited body—was put prominently in the bill of indictment, but it was never alleged that it was specially levelled at this country. It was aimed at the *governments* of the Continent, in retaliation for their conspiracies against the French Revolution. “If you invade us with bayonets, we will invade you with liberties,” was the language addressed by the orators of the Convention to the despotic powers. That this decree was, however, a fair ground of negotiation by our government cannot be denied, and it is evident from the desire of the French minister to explain away its obnoxious meaning, going so far even as to admit that “perhaps” it ought not to have been passed, that a little more remonstrance, in an earnest and peaceful spirit, would have led to a satisfactory explanation on this point. In fact, within a few months of this time the decree was rescinded.

With respect to the Dutch right to a monopoly of the Scheldt (if that was really one of the objects of the war), the twenty-two years of hostilities might have been spared; for if there was any one thing, besides the abolition of the slave trade, which the Congress of Vienna effected at the close of the war, to the satisfaction of all parties, and with the hearty concurrence of England, it was setting free the navigation of the great rivers of Europe. Nothing need be said about the remaining question of the inviolability of the territory of Holland, inasmuch as the French minister offered to give us a satisfactory pledge upon that point. I may merely add, that the Dutch government abstained from making any demand upon England to sustain its claim to the exclusive navigation of the Scheldt, and wisely so,—for it probably foresaw what happened in the war which followed, when the French having taken possession of Holland, where they were welcomed by a large part of the population as friends, and having turned the Dutch fleet against us, in less than three years we seized all the principal colonies of that country, and some of them (to our cost) we retain to the present day.

Whilst through this official correspondence the French government was endeavouring to remove the causes of war, other and less formal means were resorted to for accomplishing the same end. Attached to the French embassy were several individuals, selected for their popular address, their familiarity with the English language, and their talent in conversation or as writers, who, by mixing in society, and especially that of the Liberals, might, it was hoped, influence public opinion in favour of peace. Amongst these was one who played the chief diplomatic part in the great drama which was about to follow. “The mission of M. de Talleyrand to London,” says M. Lamartine,† “was to endeavour to fraternise the aristocratic principle of the English constitution with the democratic principle of the French constitution, which, it was believed, could be effected and controlled by an upper Chamber. It was hoped to interest the statesmen of Great Britain in a revolution imitated from their own, which, after having convulsed the people, was now being moulded in the hands of an intelligent aristocracy.”

Beyond the circles of the more ardent reformers, however, or the society of a few philosophical thinkers, these semi-official diplomatists made very little way. They were coldly and sometimes even uncivilly treated; as the following incident, in which Talleyrand played a part, will shew. “One evening all the members of the embassy, with Dumont, went to Ranelagh, which was then frequented by the most

\* Decree of Fraternity. “The National Convention declares, in the name of the French nation, that it will grant fraternity and assistance to all people who wish to recover their liberty; and it charges the executive power to send the necessary orders to the generals to give assistance to such people, and to defend those citizens who have suffered or may suffer in the cause of liberty”—19th November, 1792.

† History of Girondine, vol. i., p. 197



respectable classes of English society. As they entered, there was a murmur of voices,—‘There is the French embassy!’ All eyes were fixed on them with a curiosity not mixed with any expression of good will; and presently the crowd fell back on both sides, as if the Frenchmen had the plague upon them, and left them all the promenade to themselves.”\* This incident occurred before the dethronement of the King in August; and the writer from whom the above is quoted in the *Pictorial History of England*, after labouring through several pages to prove that the French were the authors of the war, refutes himself with great naïveté by adding, “The public feeling which would have driven England into a war in spite of any ministry, shewed itself in a marked manner even before the horrors of the 10th August and the massacres of September.”

The feeling in France towards England was the very opposite of this, up to the time when the hostile sentiments of our government became known, and, even then, there was a strong disposition to separate the aristocracy from the people, and to attribute to the former all the enmity which characterised our policy towards them. Previously to the revolution, English tastes had been largely adopted in France; and indeed so great was at one time the disposition to imitate the amusements, dress, equipage, &c. of Englishmen, that it had acquired the epithet of *Anglomania*. When political reform became the engrossing thought of the nation, what so natural as that the French people should turn a favourable eye to England, whose superior aptitude for self-government, and more jealous love of personal liberty, they were ready then, as they are now, to acknowledge. Never, therefore, was the sympathy for England so strong as at the commencement of their revolution. When the Declaration of Pilnitz, and the hostile proceedings of the emigrant nobles at Coblenz in 1791, drew forth the indignant denunciations of Brissot and other orators, and induced some of them to call for war as the only means of putting an end to the clandestine correspondence which was carried on between the “conspirators without and the traitors within,” no such feeling was entertained towards England; and even after the breaking out of hostilities with this country, so unpopular was the war, that the strongest reproach that one unscrupulous faction could throw upon another was in mutual accusation of having provoked it. This fact was at a subsequent period referred to by Lord Mornington,† one of Pitt’s supporters, as a proof that the British government at least did not provoke the war. “Robespierre,” said he, “imputes it to Brissot; Brissot retorts it upon Robespierre: the Jacobins charge it upon the Girondists; the Girondists recriminate upon the Jacobins: the mountain thunders it upon the valley; and the valley re-echoes it back against the mountain.”

“All facts,” said Sheridan, with unanswerable force, in reply, “tending to contradict the assertion which the noble lord professed to establish by them, and making still plainer that there was no party in France which was not earnest to avoid a rupture with this country, nor any party which we may not at this moment reasonably believe to be inclined to put an end to hostilities.”

I have said sufficient probably to satisfy you that France did not desire a collision with England; and that the pretexes put forward by Lord Grenville in his correspondence with M. Chauvelin were not sufficient grounds for the rupture. But I will now redeem my pledge, and prove to you, from the admissions of the partisans of the war, that their real motive was to put down opinions in France, or at least to prevent the spread of them in this country.

Parliament, as I before stated, was hastily summoned for the 13th December, 1792. The country stood on the verge of the most fearful calamity that could befall it. But the mass of the people, whose passions and prejudices had been raised against their old enemies the French, did not see the danger before them, and they were ready for a war. At the same time, to quote the words of Sir Walter Scott,‡ “the whole aristocratic party, commanding a very large majority in both Houses of Parliament, became urgent that war should be declared against France; a holy war, it said, against treason, blasphemy, and murder; and a necessary war, in order to break off all connection betwixt the French government and the discontented part

\* *Pictorial Hist. of England*, vol. iii., p. 276. † January 21, 1794.

‡ *Life of Napoleon*, ch. xv.

of our own subjects, who could not otherwise be prevented from the most close, constant, and dangerous intercourse with them." To add to the excitement, tales of plots and conspiracies were circulated; additional fortifications were ordered for the Tower of London; and a large armed force was drawn round the metropolis. Speaking of the efforts that were made to create a panic in the public mind, Lord Lauderdale\* at a later period observed:—"But is there a man in England ignorant that the most wicked arts have been practised to irritate and mislead the multitude? Have not hand-bills, wretched songs, infamous pamphlets, false and defamatory paragraphs in newspapers been circulated with the greatest assiduity, all tending to rouse the indignation of this country against France, with whom it has been long determined, I fear, to go to war? To such low artifices are these mercenaries reduced, that they have both the folly and audacity to proclaim that the New River water has been poisoned with arsenic by French emissaries."

It must not be forgotten that at the very moment when all this preparation was being made against an attack from the French, and when this panic in the public mind was thus artfully created, M. Chauvelin was besieging the Foreign Office with proposals for peace, and, when denied admittance at the front door, entering meekly at the back, asking only to know on what terms, however humiliating, war with England might be averted. The public knew nothing of this at the time, for diplomacy was then, as now, a secret art; *but the government knew it.*

The King's speech at the opening of the session began by saying, that having judged it necessary to embody a part of the militia, he had, according to law, called Parliament together. He then alluded to seditious practices and a spirit of tumult and disorder, "shewing itself in acts of riot and insurrection, which required the interposition of a military force." Then followed an allusion to "our happy constitution," which seems a little misplaced in the midst of riot and insurrection; but the King relied on the firm determination of Parliament "to defend and maintain that constitution which has so long protected the liberties, and promoted the happiness of every class of my subjects." Next, there was a complaint against France for "existing disturbances in foreign countries, disregarding the rights of neutral nations, and pursuing views of conquest and aggrandisement." The speech then announced an augmentation of the naval and military force, as "necessary in the present state of affairs, and best calculated, both to maintain internal tranquility, and to render a firm and temperate conduct effectual for preserving the blessings of peace."

The address, in reply to the speech, was carried without a division. The members who were opposed to the war, spoke under the discouraging consciousness that so far from having that popular support and sympathy which could alone make their opposition formidable, the advocates of peace were in as small a minority in the country as in Parliament. On the first night of the session, after denouncing the panic which had been artfully created, Mr. Fox said:—"I am not so ignorant of the present state of men's minds, and of the ferment artfully created, as not to know that I am now advancing an opinion likely to be unpopular. It is not the first time I have incurred the same hazard." And, on a subsequent occasion, in a still more dejected tone, he said:—"I have done my duty in submitting my ideas to the House; and in doing this, I cannot possibly have had any other motives than those of public duty. What were my motives? Not to court the favour of ministers, or those by whom ministers are supposed to be favoured; not to gratify my friends, as the debates in this House have shewn; not to court popularity, for the general conversation, both within and without these walls, has shewn that to gain popularity I must have held the opposite course. The people may treat my house as they have done that of Dr. Priestley—as it is said they have done more recently that of Mr. Walker.‡ My motive only was that they might know what was the real cause of the war into which they are likely to be plunged: and that they might know that it depended on a mere matter of form and ceremony."

\* February 12th, 1793.

† December 15th, 1792.

‡ A highly respectable inhabitant of Manchester, whose house was assailed by a "Church and King" mob, upon the charge of being a "Jacobin," or "Republican," and "Leveller." His son, who inherits his liberal principles, but whose good fortune it has been to live in times when popular intelligence can discriminate between friends and foes, is an alderman and magistrate of that city.

It is impossible to read the speeches of Fox, at this time, without feeling one's heart yearn with admiration and gratitude for the bold and resolute manner in which he opposed the war, never yielding and never repining, under the most discouraging defeats; and, although deserted by many of his friends in the house, taunted with having only a score of followers left, and obliged to admit\* that he could not walk the streets without being insulted, by hearing the charge made against him of carrying on an improper correspondence with the enemy in France, yet bearing it all with uncomplaining manliness and dignity. The annals of Parliament do not record a nobler struggle in a nobler cause.

It may naturally be asked, why, with the popular opinions running thus strongly against "French principles," did the government resort to such arts as have been described, for creating a still greater panic in men's minds, or where was the motive for going to war with the French Republic? But "the wicked fleeth when no man pursueth." The vaunted "Constitution" of that time was, so far as the House of Commons was concerned, an insult to reason, an impudent fraud, which would not bear discussion; and the "boroughmongers" as they were afterwards called, were trembling lest its real character might be exposed, if people were left at leisure to examine it. What that character was, we have been, with infinite *naïveté*, informed by one of its admirers. "The government of Great Britain," says Alison,† "which was supposed, by theoretical observers, to have been, anterior to the great change of 1832, a mixed constitution, in which the Crown, the Nobles, and the Commons mutually checked and counteracted each other, was in reality an aristocracy, having a sovereign for the executive, disguised under the popular forms of a republic." Although this government of false pretences had the two extremes of society, the interested few and the ignorant many, on its side, yet there was a small party of parliamentary reformers, who, though stigmatised as "Jacobins," "Levellers," "Republicans," were active, earnest, and able men, comprising in their body nearly all the intellect of the age; and it was from the chimerical fear that these men would put themselves under the influence of French politicians that the two countries were to be rent asunder by war. Upon this point we have the ingenious avowal of a young statesman, who lived to fill the highest office in the state. Mr. Jenkinson (afterwards Lord Liverpool)‡ said:—"He had heard it frequently urged that this was a period particularly unfavourable to a war with France, on account of the number of discontented persons amongst us in correspondence with the seditious of that country, who menaced and endangered our government and constitution. That there was a small party entertaining such designs he had very little doubt; and, from their great activity, he also considered them as dangerous; but he confessed that this very circumstance, so far from deterring him from war, became a kind of inducement. They might be troublesome in times of peace—they might be tranquil in time of war; for as soon as hostilities were commenced, the correspondence with the French must cease, and all the resource they had would be to emigrate to that country, which would be a good thing for this; or, remaining where they are, to conduct themselves like good citizens, as that correspondence, which by law was not punishable now, would in time of war be treason."

The same motive for the war was at last avowed by him who had performed the part of Peter the Hermit, in rousing the warlike spirit of the nation. Edmund Burke, who from the year 1789, was possessed by a species of monomania upon the French Revolution, took a prominent part in these discussions; indeed, whatever was the subject before the House, if he rose to speak upon it, he was pretty certain to mount his favourite hobby before he resumed his seat. "Let the subject, the occasion, the argument, be what it may," said Mr. Francis,|| "he has but one way of treating it. War and peace, the repair of a turnpike, the better government of nations, the direction of a canal, and the security of the constitution, are all alike in his contemplation: the French Revolution is an answer to everything; the French Revolution is his everlasting theme, the universal remedy, the grand specific, the never-failing panacea, the principal burden of his song; and with this he treats us

\* February 7th, 1793.

† Vol. iii., p. 101.  
‡ May 7th, 1793.

§ December 15th, 1792.

from day to day; a cold, flat, insipid hash of the same dish, perpetually served up to us in different shapes, till at length with all his cookery the taste revolts, the palate sickens at it."

At length, on the discussion of the Alien Bill,\* Burke's powers of reason and judgment seemed to be entirely overborne by a frenzied imagination. Drawing forth a dagger and brandishing it in the air, he cast it with great vehemence of action on the floor: "It is my object," said he, "to keep the French infection from this country; their principles from our minds, and their daggers from our hearts! I vote for this bill, because I believe it to be the means of saving my life and all our lives from the hands of assassins; I vote for it because it will break the abominable system of the modern pantheon, and prevent the introduction of French principles and French daggers. When they smile I see blood trickling down their faces; I see their insidious purposes,—I see that the object of all their cajoling is blood! I now warn my countrymen to beware of these execrable philosophers, whose only object it is to destroy everything that is good here, and to establish immorality and murder by precept and example!"

And on a subsequent occasion,† immediately after the declaration of hostilities, he declared his fixed opinion that "if we continued at peace with France, there would not be ten years of stability in the government of this country." Thus did he who first sounded the tocsin of war, and led the public mind through each successive phase of hostility, until he triumphed in the deadly struggle which he now begun, avow that the object he sought was to avert the danger with which French principles menaced the institutions of this country.

But it is at a somewhat later period that we discover more clearly the real motives of the war as acknowledged by its authors. In 1795, when hostilities had been carried on for two years, with but little impression upon the enemy, and when the cry for peace became general, there was less reserve in avowing the objects for which we had entered upon war. In a speech in favour of peace, Mr. Wilberforce‡ said: "With regard to the probable consequences of pursuing the war, he considered them to be in their nature uncertain. *Heretofore it might justly be said to be carried on in order to prevent the progress of French principles*; but now there was much more danger of their being strengthened by a general discontent, arising from a continuance of the war, than from any importation of the principles themselves from France."

On a subsequent occasion, after the government of France had undergone a change, and had passed into the hands of the Directory, and when the British ministry was constrained by the general discontent to make a profession of willingness to negotiate for peace, they were obliged, in order to justify themselves for having formerly advocated war, to point to the altered, and as they alleged more settled state of the French government, as the cause of the change in their policy. Mr. Pitt§ said:—"I certainly said the war was not, like others, occasioned by particular insult, or the unjust seizure of territory, or the like, *but undertaken to repel usurpation, connected with principles calculated to subvert all government*, and which, while they flourished in their original force and malignity, were totally incompatible with the accustomed relations of peace and amity. We professed also that many persons in that country felt the pressure of the calamities under which it laboured, and were ready to co-operate for the destruction of the causes which occasioned them."

In the debate in the House of Lords, which followed this pacific message from the King, a more undisguised statement was made by one who, as a cabinet minister, had the fullest opportunity of knowing the motives of those who entered upon the war. Earl Fitzwilliam¶ said:—"The present war was of a nature different from all common wars. It was commenced, not from any of the ordinary motives of policy and ambition. *It was expressly undertaken to restore order in France, and to effect the destruction of the abominable system that prevailed in that country*. Upon this understanding it was that he had separated from some of those with whom he had long acted in politics, and with other noble friends had lent aid to his Majesty's ministers.

\* December 26th, 1792.

† February 18th, 1793.

‡ May 27th, 1795.

§ December 9th, 1795.

¶ December 14th, 1795.

Upon this understanding he had filled that situation which he some time since held in the Cabinet. *Knowing then on such authority the object of the war to have been to restore order in France*, he was somewhat surprised at the declaration in the message that his Majesty was now prepared to treat for peace."

The Fitzwilliams have always had the habit of plain-speaking, though not of invariably foreseeing all the logical consequences of what they say. Their honesty has, however, been proverbial; and as in this case the speaker went to the unusual length of giving evidence as a Cabinet minister against his former colleagues, and was not contradicted, we may take his statement as conclusive proof upon the question in hand. But what must we think of the conduct of the government, and especially of Mr. Pitt and Lord Grenville, in having thrown the responsibility of the war upon France upon such pretences as the opening of the navigation of the Scheldt, whilst at the same time we have overwhelming evidence to shew that they were determined to provoke a collision for totally different objects? What will be said of it when our history is written by some future Niebuhr? I could multiply quotations of a similar tendency to the above, but I forbear from a conviction that no further evidence is required to prove my case.

But there is one act of our government, illustrative of its motives in entering upon the war, which I must not omit to mention. Shortly after the commencement of hostilities (November, 1793) our naval forces took possession of Toulon, when Admiral Hood and the British Commissioners published a proclamation, in the name of the King of England, to the people of France, in which they declared in favour of monarchy in France, in the person of Louis XVII. But not a word did they say about the opening of the navigation of the Scheldt, or the pretended objects of the war. And about the same time\* the King of England published a declaration to the French nation, in which he promises the "suspension of hostilities, and friendship, security, and protection to all those who by declaring for monarchical government shall shake off the yoke of a sanguinary anarchy." It is strange that our government did not see that this was as much an act of intervention in the internal concerns of another people, as anything which had been done by the French Convention, and that, in fact, it was affording a justification for every act of the kind perpetrated on the Continent, from the Declaration of Pilnitz to the present moment.

In drawing this argument to a close, I have done nothing but prove the truth of a statement made by a writer who has devoted far more time, labour, and learning to the investigation of the subject, than it is in my power to bestow. Considering that he is a partizan of the war, and an admirer of the political system which it was designed to uphold, I cannot but marvel at his candour, which I should the more admire if I were sure that he has fully appreciated the logical consequences that flow from his admissions. The following are the remarks of Sir A. Alison upon the origin of the war:—

"In truth, the arguments urged by government were not the only motives for commencing the war. The danger they apprehended lay nearer home than the conquests of the republicans: it was not foreign subjugation so much as domestic revolution that was dreaded if a pacific intercourse were any longer maintained with France. 'Croyez-moi,' said the Empress Catherine to Segur, in 1789, 'une guerre seule peut changer la direction des esprits en France, les réunir, donner un but plus utile aux passions et reveiller le vrai patriotisme.'† In this observation is contained the true secret, and the best vindication of the revolutionary war. The passions were excited; democratic ambition was awakened; the desire of power under the name of reform was rapidly gaining ground among the middle ranks, and the institutions of the country were threatened with an overthrow as violent as that which had recently taken place in the French monarchy. In these circumstances, the only mode of checking the evil was by engaging in a foreign contest, by drawing off the ardent spirits into active service, and, in lieu of the modern desire for innovation, rousing the ancient gallantry of the British nation."‡

Of the moral sense which could permit an approval of the sentiments of the imperial patroness of Suwarrow, I would rather not speak. But I wish that a copy of this extract could be possessed by every man in England, that all might understand the "true secret" of despots, which is to employ one nation in cutting the throats of

\* October 23, 1793.

† Believe me, a war alone can change the direction of men's minds in France, re-unite them, give a more useful aim to the passions, and awaken true patriotism.

‡ Vol. iv., p. 7.



another, so that neither may have time to reform the abuses in their own domestic government. I would say, on the contrary, the true secret of the people is to remain at peace: and not only so, but to be on their guard against false alarms about the intended aggressions of their neighbours, which, when too credulously believed, give to government all the political advantages of a war, without its risks; for they keep men's minds in a degrading state of fear and dependence, and afford the excuse for continually increasing government expenditure.

One word only upon the objection that the French were the first to *declare* war. In the present case, as in that of the Allied Powers on the continent, to which we before alluded, we were giving to ourselves all the advantages of a belligerent power by our warlike preparations, without affording to the French the fair warning of a declaration of war. The government of France acted more in accordance with the recognised law of nations in publishing the reasons why they were, contrary to their own wishes, at war with England. The language and acts of Mr. Pitt were a virtual declaration of war. Half as much said or done by a prime minister now would be enough to plunge all Europe in flames. We have seen that the militia was embodied, and the Parliament suddenly assembled on the 13th of December, 1792, when the King's speech recommended an augmentation of the army and navy. On the 28th January, 1793, upon the arrival of the news of the execution of the French King, not only was M. Chauvelin, the French minister, ordered to leave the kingdom in eight days, but the King's message, which was sent to the House of Commons announcing this fact, recommended a further augmentation of the land and sea forces. This increased armament was not now wanted, as was professed to be the case on the 13th December, for "preserving the blessings of peace," but, to quote the words of the message, "to enable his Majesty to take the most effectual measures, in the present important conjuncture, for maintaining the security and rights of his own dominions; *for supporting his allies*; and for opposing views of aggrandisement and ambition on the part of France, which would be at all times dangerous to the general interests of Europe, but are peculiarly so, when connected with the propagation of principles which lead to the violation of the most sacred duties, and are utterly subversive of the peace and order of all civil society." Once more I must beg your attention to dates. This message was delivered on the 28th January, 1793. Up to this time the French government had given undeniable proofs of desiring to preserve peace with England. And it was not till after the delivery of this message to Parliament, after a peremptory order had been given to their ambassador to leave England; after all these preparations for war; and after the insulting speeches and menaces uttered by Mr. Pitt and the other ministers in Parliament, which, as will be seen by referring to the debates of this time, were of themselves sufficient to provoke hostilities, that the French Convention, by a unanimous vote, declared war against England on the 1st February, 1793.

On the 11th February, the King sent a message to Parliament, in which he said he "relied, with confidence, on the firm and effectual support of the House of Commons, and on the zealous exertions of a brave and loyal people, in prosecuting a [when was war ever acknowledged to be otherwise?] *just and necessary war*."

The wisdom of the advice of the Czarina Catherine was exemplified in what followed. The war diverted men's minds from every domestic grievance. Hatred to the French was the one passion henceforth cultivated. All political ameliorations were postponed; reform of Parliament, a question which had previously been so ripe that Pitt himself, in company with Major Cartwright, attended public meetings in its favour, was put aside for forty years; and even the voice of Wilberforce, pleading for the slave, was for several successive sessions mute, amidst the death struggle which absorbed all the passions and sympathies of mankind.

And now, my dear sir, if you have done me the honour to read this long letter, I will conclude with an appeal for your candid judgment upon the merits of the question between us. Recollect that we are not discussing the professional claims of the Duke of Wellington to our admiration. He and his great opponent were brought forth and educated by the war of the Revolution. They were the accidents, not the cause of that mighty struggle. The question is—was that war, in its origin, just and necessary on our part? Was it so strictly a defensive war that we are warranted in

saying that God raised up the Duke as an instrument for our protection? I humbly submit that the facts of the case are in direct opposition to this view; and that it is only by pleading ignorance of the historical details which I have narrated, that we can hope to be acquitted of impiety in attributing to an all-wise and just Providence an active interposition in favour of a war so evidently unprovoked and aggressive.—  
And I remain faithfully yours,

RICHD. COBDEN.

To the Rev. ——— ———

### LETTER III.

*Mr. Cobden to the Rev. ———*

January, 1853.

My dear Sir,—I am afraid you do not overstate the case in saying, that not one in a thousand of the population of this country has ever doubted the justice and necessity of our last war with France. There is all but an unanimous sentiment upon the subject; and it is easily accounted for. The present generation of adults have been educated under circumstances which forbade an impartial judgment upon the origin of the war. They were either born during the strife of arms, when men's hopes and fears were too much involved in the issue of the struggle to find leisure for an historical inquiry into the merits of the quarrel, or after the conclusion of the peace, when people were glad to forget everything connected with the war, excepting our victories and the victors. There are no men now living, and still engaged in the active business of life, who were old enough to form an opinion upon the question, and to take a part in the controversy, when peace or war trembled in the balance in 1792: and our histories have been written too much in the interest of the political party which was at that time in power to enable our youth to grow up with sound opinions upon the conduct of the authors of the war.

But the truth must be told to the people of this country. I have no fear that they will refuse to hear it. Even were they so disposed, it would not affect the final verdict of mankind upon the question. The facts which I have narrated, together with many more leading to the same conclusion, to say nothing of the reserve of proofs which time has yet to disclose, will all be as accessible to the German and American historians as ourselves. Mr. Bancroft is approaching the epoch to which we refer; and can any one who has followed him thus far in his great historical work, and observed his acute appreciation of the workings of our aristocratic system, doubt that, should he bring his industry and penetration to the task, he will succeed in laying bare to the light of day all the most secret motives which impelled our government to join the crusade against the revolution of 1789?

But the whole truth must be told, and the public mind thoroughly imbued with the real merits of the case, not as the solution of a mere historical problem, but in the interest of peace, and as the best and, indeed, only means of preparing the way for that tone of confidence and kindness which every body, excepting a few hopelessly depraved spirits, believe will one day characterise the intercourse of France and England. For if in science and morals a truth once established be fruitful in other truths—and error, when undetected, be certain to multiply itself after its own kind—how surely must the same principle apply to the case before us!

If England be under the erroneous impression that the sanguinary feud of twenty-two years, which cost her so many children, and heaped upon her such a load of debt and taxation, was forced upon her by the unprovoked aggression of France, it is, I fear, but too natural that she should not only cherish feelings of enmity and resentment against the author of such calamities, but that there should be always smouldering in her breast dark suspicions that a similar injury may again be inflicted upon her by a power which has displayed so great a disregard of the obligations of justice. The natural result of this state of feeling is that it leads us to remind the offending party pretty frequently of the disastrous results of their former attacks, to thrust before their eyes memorials of our prowess, and to warn them from time to time that we are preparing to repel any fresh aggressions which they may be meditating against us.

If, on the other hand, the real origin of the war be impressed upon the mind of the present generation, and it be known, *popularly known*, that far from having been, as we are told it was, undertaken in behalf of liberty, or for the defence of our own shores, it was hatched upon the Continent in the secret councils of despotic courts, and fed from the industry of England by her then oligarchical government; that its object was to deprive the French people of the right of self-government, and to place their liberties at the disposal of an arbitrary king, a corrupt church, and a depraved aristocracy; then the opinion of the country, and its language and acts, will be totally different from what we have just described. Instead of feelings of resentment, there will be sentiments of regret; far from suspecting attacks from the French, the people of England, seeing through, and separating themselves from the policy by which their fathers were misled, will be rather disposed to level their suspicion at those who call upon them again, without one fact to warrant it, to put themselves in an attitude of defiance against their unoffending neighbour; and in lieu of constantly invoking the memory of their own exploits, or the reverses of their opponents, the English people will, under the circumstances which I have supposed, be anxious only for an oblivion of all memorials of an unjust and aggressive war.

Can any doubt exist as to which of these conditions of public opinion and feeling is most likely to conduce to peace, and which to war?

But, moreover, the truth must be known, in order that the people of England may be the better able to appreciate the feelings of the French towards them. The precept, "Do unto others as ye would that others should do unto you," is applicable to thought as well as act. Before we condemn the sentiments entertained by the people of France with respect to our conduct in the last war, let us endeavour to form an opinion as to what our own feelings would be under similar circumstances. To do this we must bear in mind that whilst our historians give us a flattering and partial account of the conduct of our government at the breaking out of the last war, the French writers, as may naturally be supposed, lose no opportunity of recording every fact which redounds to our disadvantage. I have abstained from giving quotations from these authorities, because they would be open to the charge of being partial and prejudiced. But it ought to be known to us that not only do these writers make the European powers who conspired against the liberties of France responsible for the war, they invariably assign to England the task of stimulating the flagging zeal of the Continental despots, and of bribing them to continue their warlike operations when all other inducements failed. The least hostile of these writers, M. Thiers, the favourite of our aristocracy, in speaking of our preparations for the campaign of 1794, says:—"England was still the soul of the coalition, and urged the powers of the Continent to hasten to destroy, on the banks of the Seine, a revolution at which she was terrified, and a rival which was detestable to her. The implacable son of Chatham had this year made prodigious efforts for the destruction of France." It is to the energies of Pitt, wielding the power of England, that France attributes the tremendous coalitions which again and again brought nearly all Europe in hostile array against her. Thus does M. Thiers describe the spirit which animated him:—"In England a revolution which had only half regenerated the social state, had left subsisting a crowd of feudal institutions which were objects of attachment for the court and aristocracy, and of attack for the opposition. Pitt had a double object in view; first, to allay the hostility of the aristocracy, to parry the demand for reform, and thus to preserve his ministry by controlling both parties; secondly, to overwhelm France beneath her own misfortunes, and the hatred of all the European governments."

These quotations afford but a faint idea of the tone in which the historical writers of that country deal with the subject. We are held up generally to popular odium as the perfidious and machiavellian plotters against the liberties of the French people.

But it will probably be asked—and the question is important—what are the *present* opinions of Frenchmen respecting their own revolution out of which the war sprung? There is nothing upon which we entertain more erroneous views. When we speak of that event, our recollection calls up those occurrences only, such as the Reign of Terror, the rise and fall of Napoleon, the wars of conquest carried on by him, and

the final collapse of the territory of France within its former boundaries, which seem to stamp with failure, if not with disgrace, the entire character of the revolution. The Frenchman, on the contrary, directs his thoughts steadily to the year 1789. He finds the best excuse he can for the madness of 1794; he will point, with pride, to the generous magnanimity of the populace of Paris, in 1830 and 1848, as an atonement for the Reign of Terror; he throws upon foreign powers, and especially upon England, the responsibility for the long wars which desolated so many of the countries of Europe; but towards the Constituent Assembly of 1789, and the principles which they established, his feelings of reverence and gratitude are stronger than ever; he never alludes to them but with enthusiasm and admiration. This feeling is confined to no class, as the following extract from a speech addressed by M. Thiers on the 29th June, 1851, to that most Conservative body, the National Assembly, and the response which it elicited, will show. It is taken verbatim from a report published by himself:—

“*M. Thiers*: Let us do honour to the men who have maintained in France, since 1789, real civil equality—equality of taxation, which we owe to our admirable and noble Revolution. (*Notre belle et honorable révolution.*)—Assent and agitation.

“*A voice on the left*: Settle that with your friends. (Oh, oh! murmurs.)

“*A voice on the right*: Don't mistake; it is not the Revolution of 1848 that is referred to.

“*M. Thiers*: I speak of the Revolution of 1789, and I trust we are all of one mind upon that. (The left. Yes! Yes! Laughter.)

“*M. Charras*: Talk to the right.

“*M. Thiers*: I have a better opinion than you of my country, and of all our parties, and I am convinced that no one will encounter coldness or disapprobation from any quarter when praising the Revolution of 1789.—Marks of approbation from a great number of benches.”

There is no greater proof of the predominant favour in which any opinions are held in France than to find them advocated by M. Thiers. But whilst employed upon this letter, a recent production from the pen of my accomplished friend, M. Michael Chevalier, has met my eye, in which he speaks of “the immortal principles” of “our glorious Constituent Assembly of 1789.” Where two men of such eminent authority, but of such diametrically opposite views upon economical principles, agree in their admiration of a particular policy, it is a proof that it must have irresistible claims upon public approbation. Men of the highest social position in France—even they whose fathers fell a sacrifice to the Reign of Terror, admit that to the measures of 1789 (they were in substance described in my last letter), which have elevated the millions of their countrymen, from a condition hardly superior to that of the Russian serf, to the rank of citizens and proprietors of the soil, France is indebted for a more rapid advance in civilisation, wealth, and happiness, than was ever previously made by any community of a similar extent, within the same period of time.

This feeling, so universally shared, has not been impaired by the recent changes in France, for it is directed less towards *forms* of government, or political institutions; than to the constitution of society itself. And here let me observe again upon the erroneous notions we fall into as to the state of public opinion in France, because we insist upon judging it by our own standard. Assuredly, if the French have the presumption to measure our habits and feelings by theirs, they must commit as great blunders. Our glory is that the franchises and charters gained by our forefathers have secured us an amount of *personal freedom* that is not to be surpassed under any form of government. And it is the jealous, patriotic, unselfish love of this freedom, impelling the whole community to rush to the legal rescue of the meanest pauper if his chartered personal liberties be infringed by those in power, that distinguishes us from all European countries; and I would rather part with every sentiment of liberty we possess than this, because, with it, every other right is attainable.

But the French people care little for a charter of *habeas corpus*, else, during their many revolutions, when power has descended into the streets, why has it not been secured? and the liberty of the press, and the right of association, and public meeting, have been violated by universal suffrage almost as much as by their emperors and kings. That which the French really prize, and the English trouble themselves little about, is the absence of privileged inequality in their social system. Any violation of this principle is resisted with all the jealousy which we display in matters of individual freedom. It was this spirit which baffled the design of Napoleon

and Louis XVIII. to found an aristocracy by the creation of entails. Now the revolution of 1789, besides securing liberty of worship, and establishing probably the fairest system of government taxation (apart from the protective policy of the nation) at present to be found in the world, has divided the rich land of France amongst its whole population. It is these measures, coupled with the abolition of hereditary rank, and of the law of entail, which have chiefly contributed to gain for the Constituent Assembly the gratitude of a people so jealous of privilege, and so passionately attached to the soil. Yet it cannot be too strongly impressed upon our minds that it was against the principles of this very Assembly that Burke, in 1790, launched his fiery declamation, in which we find the following amongst many similar invectives:—"You would not have chosen to consider the French as a people of yesterday, as a nation of low-born servile wretches, until the emancipating year of 1789;" and we are equally bound to remember that it was with the intention of overthrowing the system of government established by that Assembly that the despotic powers marshalled their armies for the invasion of France, and when, upon the failure of the attack, we threw the weight of England into the scale of despotism. Having fully realized to ourselves the case of the French people, let us ask—what would be our feelings under their circumstances?

Why, I fear, in the first place, we should, like them, still remember with some bitterness the unprovoked attack made upon us by the nations of Europe, and that we should be sometimes tempted to call that country in particular "perfidious," which, whilst professing to be free itself, and to have derived its freedom from a revolution, yet joined the despots of the Continent in a coalition against the liberties of another people; we who have just paid almost pagan honours to the remains of a general who fought the battles of that unrighteous coalition—what would we have done in honour of those soldiers who beat back from our frontiers confederate armies of literally every nation in Christian Europe, except Sweden, Denmark, and Switzerland? Should we not, if we were Frenchmen, be greater worshippers of the name of Napoleon, if possible, than we are of Wellington and Nelson—and with greater reason? Should we not forgive him his ambition, his selfishness, his despotic rule? would not every fault be forgotten in the recollection that he humbled Prussia, who had without provocation assailed us when in the throes of a domestic revolution, and that he dictated terms at Vienna to Austria, who had actually begun the dismemberment\* of our own territory? Should not we in all probability still feel so much under the influence of former dangers and disasters as to cling for protection to a large standing army? and might not that centralized government which alone enabled us to preserve our independence still find favour in our sight? and should we not indulge a feeling of proud defiance in electing for the chief of the state the next heir to that great military hero, the child and champion of the revolution, whose family had been especially proscribed by the coalesced powers before whom he finally fell? Yes, however wise men might moralise, and good men mourn, these would, under the circumstances, I am sure, be the feelings and passions of Englishmen, aye, and probably, in even a stronger degree than they are now cherished in France.

What, then, are the results which I anticipate from the general diffusion of a true knowledge of the origin and character of the last French war? In the first place, a more friendly and tolerant feeling towards the French people. The maxim of Rochefoucault, that we never forgive those we have injured, if it be not unjust as applied to individuals, does not certainly hold good with respect to communities. Great nations may be proud, and even vain, but they are ever magnanimous; and it is only meanness which could lead us to visit upon our victim the penalty of our own injustice. Besides, the maxim is not intended to apply, even in individuals, to generous natures, and generosity is the invariable attribute of great masses of men.

But, in the next place, I should expect, from a more correct knowledge of our error of sixty years ago, that we shall be less likely to repeat it now. Is it certain that the lesson will not be required? Are there no symptoms that we have spirits amongst us who want not the will, if the power and occasion be afforded, to play the

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\* At Valenciennes and Conde.



part of Burke in our day? He excited the indignation of his countrymen against a republic which had decapitated a king; now our sympathies are roused in behalf of a republic which has been strangled by an emperor. However inconsistent, in other respects, our conduct at the two epochs may be, we seem, in both cases, likely to fall into the error of forgetting that the French nation are the legitimate tribunal for disposing of the grievance. To forget this is indeed a more flagrant act of intervention on our part than was that of our forefathers, inasmuch as, whilst they usurped the functions of twenty-four millions of Frenchmen we are now in danger of treating thirty-six millions with no greater consideration.

I have said that we are not without imitators of the *Reflections*. A small volume of *Letters of "An Englishman," on Louis Napoleon, the Empire, and the Coup d'Etat, reprinted with large additions from "The Times,"* is lying before me. I know a cynical person who stoutly maintains the theory that we are not progressive creatures; that, on the contrary, we move in a circle of instincts; and that a given cycle of years brings us back again to the follies and errors from which we thought mankind had emancipated itself. And, really, these *Letters* are calculated to encourage him in his cynicism. For here we have the very same invectives levelled at Louis Napoleon which were hurled at the Constituent Assembly sixty years ago—the style, the language, the very epithets are identically the same. Take a couple of morsels by way of illustration—the one speaking of the Constituent Assembly of 1789; and the other of Louis Napoleon in 1852:—

BURKE, 1790.

"How came the Assembly by their present power over the army? Chiefly, to be sure, by debauching the soldiers from their officers."

ENGLISHMAN, 1852.

"The banquets to the sub-officers, the champagne, the toasts, and the reviews, disclosed a continuity of purpose, and a determination to debauch the soldiery, calculated to open the eyes of all."

So much for a specimen of specific accusation.  
Now for a sample of general invective.

BURKE, 1790.

*Speaking of the Constituent Assembly.*

"When all the frauds, impostures, violences, rapines, burnings, murders, confiscations, compulsory paper currencies, and every description of tyranny and cruelty employed to bring about and to uphold this Revolution, have their natural effect, that is, to shock the moral sentiments of all virtuous sober minds, the abettors of this philosophic system immediately strain their throats in a decla nation against the old monarchical government of France."

ENGLISHMAN, 1852,

*Speaking of Louis Napoleon.*

"A self-convicted perjurer, an attainted traitor, a conspirator successful by the foulest treachery, the purchase of the soldiery, and the butchery of thousands, he must, if not cut short in his career, go all length of tyranny. For him there is no halt, for his system no element of either stability or progress. It is a hopeless and absolute anachronism."

Considering that the result of Burke's declamation was a war of twenty-two years, first to put down the French Republic, and afterwards Napoleon Bonaparte, both in the interest of the Bourbons; that the war cost us some five hundred millions or lebt; and that the result is, this present year 1853, a Bonaparte, whose family we proscribed, sitting upon the French throne, and the Bourbons, whom we installed at the Tuilleries, fugitives from the soil of France—remembering these things, and beholding this not altogether unsuccessful attempt at an imitation of the *Reflections*, it does certainly afford a triumph to my cynical acquaintance, so far at least as to raise a doubt whether progressive wisdom be an element of our foreign policy. I could give many specimens of declamatory writing from the *Letters*, not inferior to Burke in style, and some of them surpassing him in the vigour of their invective. Take the following as an illustration of the lengths to which the writer's vehemence carries him, and let it be borne in mind that these letters have had a far wider circulation than Burke's great philippic, with all its popularity, could boast of: I invite attention to those passages marked by me in italics. "The presidential chair or the imperial throne is set upon a crater—the soil is volcanic, undermined and trembling, the steps are slippery with blood—and the darkening steam of smouldering hatred, conspiracy, and vengeance is exhaling round it. Each party can furnish its contingents for tyrannicide; the assassin dogs him in the street; and even at the balls or

*banquets of the Elysée he may find the fate of Gustavus.* He who has been false to all must only look for falsehood, and is doomed to daily and to nightly fears of mutinies, insurrections, and revenge. Conscience cannot be altogether stifled, and will sometimes obtrude, in her horrible phantasmagoria, the ghastly corpses of the Boulevards."

Nobody will suppose that I would deny to any one the right of publishing his views upon French or any other politics. So far am I from wishing to restrain the liberty of the press, it is my constant complaint that it is not free enough. The press, in my opinion, should be the only censor of the press; and in this spirit I would appeal to public opinion, against the evil tendency of these and similar productions. We all know how the strictures of Burke began with criticism, grew into menace, and ended in a cry for war. The "Englishman's" *Letters* are here again an exact counterpart of their great original. The volume contains ten letters; the two first, penned in a style of which I have given specimens, are furious attacks upon Louis Napoleon and his government; with passing condemnations of the majority of the Legislative Assembly, the Orleanists, the bourgeoisie, the peasantry, the soldiers, and the priests; in fact there is hardly any party in France which escapes his brilliant vituperation. Next comes letter the third, headed, most appropriately, after all this provoking abuse, *The National Defences*; which subject he discusses with his telling style, and, upon the whole, with great good sense. Having thus provided against accidents, and ascertained that he was ensconced in something better than a "glass house," he resumes his vocation of pelting with the hardest and sharpest words he can find, in his copious vocabulary of invective, Louis Napoleon in particular, and all sorts of men in general, at home and abroad. After indulging himself in this way through four more letters, we come to the eighth, which bears the title—somewhat out of place in such company—of *Peace at all Price*. It would seem that Mr. Burritt and Mr. Fry having taken alarm at the hostile tone of the English press, had set on foot a scheme for counteracting the mischief. Addresses, containing assurances of friendship and peace, were drawn up in several of our towns, signed by the inhabitants, and forwarded to various places in France. This movement, than which nothing could be more amiable, and certainly nothing more harmless, draws down upon the heads of poor Messrs. Burritt and Fry, and the Peace Party generally, such a volley of vituperative epithets, that they might almost excite the jealousy of M. Bonaparte himself. Speaking of the Peace Advocates—"they require," says he, "keepers, not reporters—their place is Hanwell, not the London Tavern, and their chairman should be Doctor Conolly!"

Now, in the course pursued by the "Englishman," we have an epitome of the conduct of all such writers;—they begin with denunciations of the French government; they then call for more "defences" as a protection against the hostility which they instinctively feel such language naturally excites; and they end in onslaught upon the advocates of peace because they do not join in the cry.

Before indulging this expensive propensity for scolding, this determination to grumble not only for ourselves but also for thirty-six millions of Frenchmen, it behoves us to ask, not only whether any benefit will arise, but whether positive injury may not be done, even to the people we wish to serve, by our uncalled for interference. It is hardly necessary that I should declare, that, were Louis Napoleon an Englishman, or I a Frenchman, however small a minority of opponents he might have, I should be one of them;—that is all I have to say in the matter; for anything more would in my opinion be mere impertinence towards the French people, who, for reasons best known to themselves, acquiesce in his rule. But admitting for the sake of argument that all that is said of the tyranny, treachery, and wickedness of Louis Napoleon be true; those are precisely the qualities in despotic monarchs, to which we are indebted for our liberties. Why should not the French be allowed the opportunity of deriving some of the advantages which we have gained from bad sovereigns. Where would our charters and franchises have been, if our Johns and Jameses had not reigned, and misgoverned? Nobody pretends that the French emperor is quite so bad as our eighth Henry; yet we contrived to owe to him our Protestantism. If half that is alleged against Louis Napoleon be true, the French people will have him at a great disadvantage in any controversy or struggle they may be engaged in with him.

One thing alone could prevent this—the popularity which will assuredly follow from continued attacks in the English press, such as I have just quoted.

But here let me warn you against the belief into which so many fall, that the hostile tone adopted by writers of this country towards the French government, and the cry of an invasion, have reference to the present despotic ruler of France only. That is one of the many shapes which the cry has assumed. But it was first heard when Louis Philippe, the “Napoleon of Peace,” was on the throne. The letter of the Duke of Wellington to Sir John Burgoyne, which has been made the text-book for panic-mongers ever since, was written when the King of the French had given seventeen years proof of his pacific policy, and when that representative form of government, *which we are now told was the guarantee of peace*, was still subsisting in France: it made its appearance in 1847, when we were already spending more upon our warlike armaments than in any of the previous thirty years; more by two millions of money than the most terrified invasionist now proposes to expend: and yet at that time, and under those circumstances, the cry for more defence against the French was as active, and the clamour against the peace party who resisted it as strong, as at any later time; and the very same parties who now advocate increased armaments to protect our shores against Louis Napoleon, were amongst the loudest of those who swelled the panic cry in 1847.

An allusion to the infirmities of a great mind, however painful at the present moment, is rendered absolutely necessary by those who quote the authority of the Duke of Wellington’s declining years in favour of a policy which, in my opinion, tends neither to the peace nor the prosperity of the country. At the time of penning his letter to General Burgoyne, the Duke was verging upon his eightieth year. Now, no man retains *all* his faculties unimpaired at fourscore. Nature does not suspend her laws, even in behalf of her favourite sons. The Duke was mortal, and therefore subject to that merciful law which draws a veil over our reason, and dims the mental vision as we approach the end of the vista which terminates with the tomb. But the faculties do not all pay this debt of nature at once, or in equal proportion. Sometimes the strongest part of our nature, which may have been subjected to the greatest strain, declines the first. In the Duke’s case, his nervous system, his “iron” characteristic gave way. He who at forty was incapable of fear, at eighty was subject to almost infantine alarms. This was shown on several public occasions; but on none so strongly as in the provision made by him against an insurrection or a revolution during the Great Exhibition of 1851, when, as is known to those who were in authority, or in connexion with that undertaking, he was haunted with terrors which led him to change the entire disposition of the army for the year, to refuse to the household regiments the usual retreat to summer quarters, and to surround the metropolis with troops. No one in the full possession of a vigorous intellect could have possibly fallen into the error of supposing that the moment, when all people’s minds were wound up by a year’s previous agitation to the highest pitch of interest in a holiday exhibition, would be chosen for a great and combined political demonstration. Human nature, and especially English nature, is never liable to be possessed by two such absorbing ideas at the same time. In fact, such a diversion of men’s minds from public affairs as the Great Exhibition afforded is precisely that which despots have employed for escaping the scrutiny of their own misgovernment. But, as is well known, at that moment universal political contentment reigned throughout England.

If, however, as was supposed, the Duke’s preparations were levelled at the foreigners who were attracted to London, the absence of a calm and vigorous reason is still more apparent. For at that time political propagandism was dead even on the Continent; their revolutions had failed; universal reaction had succeeded to democratic fever; and England was regarded as the only great country in Europe where political freedom was “holding its own.” Besides, a moment’s clear reflection would have suggested the obvious answer to such fears, that the red republicans and revolutionists of the Continent were not the persons likely to find the money for paying a visit in great numbers to England. In fact, so great an obstacle did the expense present, that during the whole year scarcely fifty thousand foreigners, European and American, above the average of annual visitors, reached our shores: and it must be

evident, that, against any dangers, whether of mischief or spoliation, contemplated by foreigners or English on that occasion, a good police force, which was most amply provided by the commissioners, and not an army, was the only rational provision.

But I appeal from the Duke's advice in 1847, to his own example, when in complete possession of his mental powers, in 1835. He was a member of Sir Robert Peel's government in the latter year, which is memorable for having witnessed the lowest military expenditure since the peace. The estimates of that year are always quoted by financial reformers as a model of economy. The Duke was consulted by Sir Robert Peel, and became an assenting party to those estimates. What was the change of circumstances which warranted so great a revolution in his views in 1847? His letter might lead us to suppose that steam navigation had in the meantime been discovered. Does any one whose memory is unimpaired forget that in 1835 our coasts and narrow seas swarmed with steamers, that our sailing vessels were regularly towed to sea by them, and that we were then discussing the merits of the ports in Ireland from which steam-ships should start for America? The Duke never afterwards acknowledged that he neglected the defence of the country when he was in power. Nobody has made such a charge against him. But I and others who have advocated a return to the expenditure of 1835 have been denounced for wishing to leave the country defenceless. I must leave my opponents to reconcile their conduct with the reverence they profess to feel for the authority of the Duke of Wellington.

The Duke's letter has been followed by a shoal of publications, all apparently designed to tempt the French to make a descent upon our shores; for all are, more or less, full of arguments to prove how easily it might be effected. Some of them give plans of our ports, and point out the nearest road to London; others describe, in seductive phrases, the rich booty that awaits them there. Foremost of these is Sir Francis B. Head, who has given us a thick volume under the title of *The Defenceless State of Great Britain*; then we have *Thoughts on National Defence*, by Vice-Admiral Bowles; *On the Defence of England*, by Sir Charles J. Napier, who tells us that he "believes that our young soldiers pray night and day" for an invasion; *A Plan for the Formation of a Maritime Militia*, by Captain Elliot; *National Defences*, by Montague Gore, Esq.; *Memorandum on the Necessity of a Secretary of State for our Defences*, &c., by Robert Carmichael Smith; *The Defence of our Mercantile Sea-ports*, by a Retired Artillery Officer; and amongst a host of others is *The Peril of Portsmouth*, by James Fergusson, Esq., WITH A PLAN; commencing most portentously:—"Few persons are perhaps aware that Portsmouth, which from its position and its extent, is by far the most important station of the British navy, is at present in so defenceless a state, that it could easily be taken by a *coup-de-main*, either from the sea or by land. Yet such is the undoubted state of the case, and it is further easy of proof that if it were to fall into the hands of an enemy, the navy of England would, from that very circumstance, be crippled, as a defenceless element at least, to the extent of one-half its power; while the hostile occupation of Portsmouth would render the invasion of England as simple and as easy a problem as ever was submitted to the consideration of any military man, &c., &c." Surely the French must have lost all pretensions to their character for politeness, or they would have long ago accepted these pressing invitations to pay our shores a visit!

There are two assumptions running through nearly all these productions. First, that we have made no provision for our defence, and therefore offer a tempting prey to an invader; and, next, that the French are a mere band of pirates, bound by no ties of civilisation, and ready to pounce upon any point of our coast which is left unprotected.

The first assumption may be disposed of with a few figures. We expend every year from fifteen to sixteen millions in warlike preparations; and we have been, ever since the Duke of Wellington's estimates of 1835, constantly augmenting the number of our armed forces. In that year they amounted altogether to 145,846—at the close of the last Parliament they stood at 272,481;\* thus showing an addition

\* In addition to this, the army in India amounts to 289,529 men, making altogether 562,010 men. The cost of the Indian army is ten millions, which, added to our fifteen millions, makes £25,000,000—the largest sum paid by any nation for a peace establishment.

since 1835 of 126,635. The following is a detailed list of the increase from official sources:—

*Amount and Description of all the Forces added since 1835.*

Cavalry and infantry added .....	20,666
Ordnance corps .....	7,263
Sailors and marines .....	12,095
Enrolled pensioners .....	18,500
Dockyard battalions (armed and drilled) .....	9,200
Coast guard (organised and drilled to the use of artillery since 1835) .....	5,000
Irish constabulary increase .....	4,627
Militia increase voted .....	54,049
	<hr/>
	131,400
Deduct decrease of yeomanry .....	4,765
	<hr/>
Total increase since 1835 up to June, 1852 .....	126,635

Thus stood matters at the close of the last Parliament, in June. But the cry was still “they come.” The “invasionists” renewed their annual autumn clamour; and no sooner had the new Parliament assembled in November, for the short session, than there was a proposal for a further increase of our “defences.” The money was voted without a division. Mr. Hume, who had seen many of the popular organs of public opinion joining in the cry, contented himself with a protest; and then, in despair of any other corrective, left the cure of the evil to the tax-gatherer; and I confess for the moment to have shared his sentiments.

The other argument of the invasionists,—that France is ready to assail us upon any vulnerable point, will be successful in proportion only to our ignorance of the character and condition of the French people, and of the origin and history of the last war. Everything in that country is viewed by us through a distorted and prejudiced medium. We regard France as the most aggressive and warlike country on the Continent, because we have all read of her invasions of other countries, without recollecting that they were in retaliation for an unprovoked attack upon her;—we view with alarm the enthusiasm of the French people for their army, but we cannot so far enter into their feelings as to know that it springs from gratitude, because “it was the army,” to use the words of the conservative and peace-loving *Journal des Débats*, “which represented her with admirable *éclat* on fields of battle—that is to say, on the spot to which it was necessary that the whole of France should repair in order to defend the new life which she held from 1789.” Doubtless there is danger to be feared from this predominance of the military spirit, however created, a danger most to be dreaded by France herself; but let it not be forgotten that we helped to plant and water the upas tree, and have no right to charge with our sins those who are destined to live under its shade.

Besides, we must bear in mind that the strength of the army of France is only in proportion to that of other continental states; and that her navy is always regulated with reference to our own, generally about in the ratio of two-thirds of our force. “We pay England the compliment,” said M. Thiers in the Chamber of Deputies in 1846, “of thinking only of her when determining our naval force; we never heed the ships which sail forth from Trieste or Venice—we care only for those that leave Portsmouth and Plymouth.” “Oh, but,” I sometimes hear it very complacently said, “everybody knows that England is only armed in self-defence, and in the interests of peace.” But when France looks at our 500 ships of war, our 180 war steamers, and hears of our great preparations at Alderney, Jersey, and other points close to her shores, she has very different suspicions. She recalls to mind our conduct in 1793, when, within a twelvemonth after the commencement of hostilities, we had taken possession of Toulon (her Portsmouth) and captured or burnt a great part of her fleet; and when we landed an expedition on the coast of Brittany, and stirred up afresh the smouldering fires of civil war. If we are so alarmed at the idea of a French invasion, which has not occurred for nearly eight hundred years, may we not excuse the people of France if they are not quite free from a similar apprehension, seeing that not a century has passed since the Norman conquest in which we have not paid hostile visits to her shores? The French have a lively



recollection of the terrible disasters they suffered from the implacable enmity of our government during the last war. They found themselves assailed by a feudal aristocracy, having at its command the wealth of a manufacturing and mercantile people thus presenting the most formidable combination for warlike purposes to be found recorded in the world's history: and knowing as they do that political power in this country is still mainly in the hands of the same class, some allowance must be made for them if they have not quite made up their minds that peace and non-intervention are to be our invariable policy for the future. Taking this candid view of the case, we shall admit that the extent of the preparations in France must be in some degree commensurate with the amount of our own warlike armaments.

I will add a few remarks upon the present state of France, as compared with her condition in 1793, and endeavour to form an estimate of the probabilities of a war between her and this country; or rather, I should say, of the prospect of an invasion of England by France; for I will assume the writers and declaimers about this invasion to be in earnest; I will suppose that they really mean an invasion of England, and not a march upon Belgium, or any other continental state; I will take for granted that we have not now, as was the case in 1792, to deal with false pretences, to cover other designs, and that, in the discussion of a French invasion, we are not witnessing a repetition of the bold dissimulation on the one side, and gross credulity on the other, which preceded the war of 1793. I will, for the sake of argument, admit the good faith of those who predict a war with France, and a consequent descent upon our shores; nay, I will go further, and even not call in question the sincerity of that party which foretells an invasion of England without any previous declaration of war.

What are the circumstances of Europe calculated to produce a war? There is one, and only one danger peculiar to our times, and it was seen by the present Prime Minister, when he thus expressed himself:—

"He was disposed," Lord Aberdeen\* said, "to dissent from the maxims which had of late years received very general assent, that the best security for the continuance of peace, was to be prepared for war. That was a maxim which might have been applied to the nations of antiquity, and to society in a comparatively barbarous and uncivilised state, when warlike preparations cost but little, but it was not a maxim which ought to be applied to modern nations, when the facilities of the preparations for war were very different. Men, when they adopted such a maxim, and made large preparations in time of peace that would be sufficient in the time of war, were apt to be influenced by the desire to put their efficiency to the test, that all their great preparations, and the result of their toil and expense, might not be thrown away. He thought, therefore, that it was no security to any country against the chances of war, to incur great expense and make great preparations for warlike purposes. A most distinguished statesman† of France had lately emphatically declared in the French Chamber his desire for peace, but he added that to maintain it he must have an army of 800,000 men. And what, he (the Earl of Aberdeen) would ask, could be expected from the raising of such a force but war, or national bankruptcy? He therefore dreaded the intention of those who desired such extensive armaments, notwithstanding the pacific professions they made; and he could not be at ease as regarded the stability of peace until he saw a great reduction in the great establishments of Europe. Such should be the great object of all governments, and more especially of the government of this country."

Thus spoke Lord Aberdeen in 1849. The evil has not diminished since that time. Europe has almost degenerated into a military barracks. It is computed by Baron Von Reden, the celebrated German statistical writer, that one half of its population in the flower of manhood are bearing arms. It is certain that in the very height of Napoleon's wars, the effective force of the continental armies was less than at present. For a long time the cuckoo cry was repeated, "to preserve peace, prepare for war," but the wisest statesmen of our age have concurred with the peace party, that the greater the preparation the more imminent is the risk of a collision, owing to the preponderance which is thereby given in the councils of nations to those who by education, taste, and even interest must be the least earnestly disposed for peace. At this moment a martial tone pervades the courts and cabinets, as well as the most influential classes of the continental states; and never, even in England, since the war, was the military spirit so much in the ascendant in the higher circles as at the present time. To what then are we to attribute the preservation of peace and the present prospect of its continuance, in spite of this dangerous element, but to the fact that, whilst governments are making unprecedented preparations for

\* Hansard, vol. 107, p. 704.

† M. Thiers.

hostilities, all the signs and symptoms of the age tend more than ever in the opposite direction? Let us see what are the facts which warrant this conclusion.

The first safeguard against the employment of these enormous standing armies in foreign wars is, that they are indispensable at home, to repress the discontent caused in a great degree by the burden which their own cost imposes on the people. Sir Robert Peel foresaw this result in 1841, when he said that "*the danger of aggression is infinitely less than the danger of those sufferings to which the present exorbitant expenditure must give rise.*" Their growing intelligence will render the people every year more dissatisfied with the yoke imposed on them; and athwart these armed and drilled mechanical tools of despotism may be often heard low mutterings, which will assuredly swell some day into a shout of defiance. Internal revolutions may be safely predicted of every country whose government rests not upon public opinion, but the bayonets of its soldiers. Those internal convulsions are, however, no longer to be feared as the causes of war; for the world has wisely resolved (and it is one of the lessons learned from the last war) that henceforth every nation shall be left to regulate its own domestic affairs, free from the intervention of strangers. It is true that, whilst during the late revolutionary period this rule was scrupulously observed towards the great powers, it was flagrantly outraged in the case of Hungary, Italy, and Hesse-Cassel, against which acts of injustice to the smaller States, the public opinion of the civilised world ought to be brought to bear, unless we are to sit down and acknowledge that the weak are to have no rights, and the strong to be bound by no law. In this change of policy, however, which will certainly be observed towards France, we have a security against a repetition of the offence which led to the last war.

There are not a few persons, especially of the military class, who, ever since the peace, have been haunted with the apparition of the late war, and have advocated a state of preparation calculated to meet as great efforts on the part of France as those put forth by Napoleon himself. They will even go so far as to predict the exact latitude where future Trafalgars or Saint Vincents are to be fought, and call for the construction of harbours and basins, where our crippled ships may be repaired, after their imaginary engagements.\* Now, without laying myself open to the charge of foretelling perpetual peace—for nothing appears to be more offensive to certain parties—I must say that I think the very fact of the wars of the French Revolution having happened is an argument against their soon recurring again. For even if I take no credit for the lesson which that bloody and abortive struggle affords, if I admit the unteachable character of nations, still Nature has her own way of proceeding, and she does not repeat herself every generation in extraordinary performances of any kind. Alexanders, Cæsars, Charlemagnes, and Napoleons are happily not annual, or even centennial, productions; and, like the exhausted eruptions of our physical globe, they have never been reproduced upon the same spot. Nowhere is the husbandman more safe against a convulsion of nature than when he plants his vines in the crater of an extinct volcano. The very magnitude of the operations of Bonaparte, by forbidding all attempts at rivalry, is rather calculated to check than invite imitation. "The death of Napoleon," says Chateaubriand, "inaugurated an era of peace: his wars were conducted on so mighty a scale (it is perhaps the only good that remains of them) that they have rendered all future superiority in that career impossible. In closing the temple of Janus violently after him, he left such heaps of slain piled up behind the door that it cannot be opened again." But I must refrain from these flights of a humane imagination, in deference to those who, whilst hoping and desiring universal and perpetual peace, are yet impatient of any arguments which promise the fulfilment of their aspirations.

Let us, then, whilst agreeing upon the possibility of such an occurrence, confine ourselves to a notice of those circumstances in the present condition of France, which render a war on her part less likely in 1853 than in 1793. Fortunately she would, in common with every other European state, encounter at the first step all but an insuperable obstacle in the want of money. It is true that, in proportion to

\* Such arguments have been gravely urged in the House of Commons by naval men; and, what still worse, they have been acted upon.

her resources, the debt of France is less now than it was in 1793. But, at the latter epoch, she had vast masses of landed property available for the expenses of the war. The church lands, which by some writers were estimated at a fourth of the soil of France; the confiscated estates of the emigrant nobles; the national domains, and the national forests: this immense property, altogether valued by different writers at from five hundred millions sterling to double that sum, fell in the course of four years into the hands of the revolutionary government, and was made by them the basis of a paper money, denominated *assignats*, with which they paid their soldiers, and were enabled to make those gigantic efforts which astonished and terrified the despotic governments of Europe.

There is no doubt that for a time this creation of paper money gave to the French government all the power which would have been derived from a foreign loan, or the most productive taxes. It seemed in the eyes of the wild theorists of Paris, who were at that time trampling each other down in quick succession in the death struggle for power, that they possessed an inexhaustible mine of riches, and each one resorted to it more freely than his predecessor. For every new campaign fresh issues of *assignats* were decreed. When war was declared against England, eight hundred millions of francs were ordered to be created. The result is known to everybody. The more plentiful the *assignats* were, the less became their value, or in other words the dearer grew all commodities; bloody decrees followed to keep down prices; but markets were not to be permanently regulated, even by the Reign of Terror. Ultimately when seven hundred millions sterling of *assignats* had been issued, they fell to one and a half per cent. of their nominal value; and a general at the head of an army in 1795, with a pay of four thousand francs a month, was in the actual receipt of eight pounds only in gold or silver. But paper money had, in the meantime, enabled the government to overcome Pitt's first coalition.

But, in case of a war, in 1853, the French government would have none of these temporary resources. The domains of the church, the crown, and the aristocracy, divided and subdivided, have passed into the hands of the people. There remain no great masses of landed property to seize for the benefit of the state. The very name of *assignat* conjures up visions of confiscation. In no country in the world is there so great a distrust of paper money as in France. To raise the funds necessary for entering upon a war the government of France must now impose taxes on the eight millions of proprietors amongst whom the land is parcelled, and by whom the great bulk of the revenue is contributed. As a declaration of war would be followed by an immediate falling off in the receipts of indirect taxes from customs and excise, this defalcation, as well as the extra demand for warlike purposes, must fall upon the land. The peasant proprietors of France, ignorant as they are in many respects, know instinctively all this, and they are, therefore, to a man opposed to a war; and hence it is, that in all Louis Napoleon's addresses to them (and they, in the ultimate appeal, really govern France), whether as candidate for the Assembly, the Presidency, or the Empire, he has invariably declared himself in favour of peace.

But I think I hear it objected that the French often made war pay its own expenses. It is true, and to a great extent the foregoing statement explains how it was accomplished. Wherever the French armies went, they carried with them the doctrine of liberty and equality, and they were received less as conquerors than deliverers by the mass of the people; for the populations of the invaded countries, like the French themselves previous to the revolution, were oppressed by the privileged classes, and ground down to the earth by inordinate and unjust taxation. Everywhere the invaders found great masses of property belonging to the government, the church, and exclusive corporations; and, in some cases, the monastic orders were still revelling in their pristine wealth and luxury. These great accumulations of property were confiscated for the use of the armies of the "Republic." In some cases considerable sums were transmitted to Paris, for the service of the home government. Napoleon sent home two millions sterling during his first campaign in Italy; and it is stated that the large amount of specie found by the French in the coffers of the frugal aristocratic government of Berne was of essential service in fitting out the expedition to Egypt.

But how changed is all this at the present time! An invading army, instead of

anding governments with a stock of bullion to tempt their cupidity, or a good balance at their bankers, would encounter nothing but debt and embarrassment, which the first shock of war would convert into bankruptcy and ruin: they would find church lands and government domains parcelled among the people; and as any attempt to levy contributions must bring the invaders at once into collision with the mass of the population, it would be found far cheaper and wiser to pay their own expenses, than attempt to raise the money by a process which would convert hostilities between governments into a crusade against individuals, where every house would be the battle ground in defence of the most cherished rights of home, family, and property.

And to increase the difficulty, war itself, owing to the application of greater science to the process of human destruction, has become a much more costly pursuit. So great has been the *improvement* in the construction of horizontal shells, and other contrivances in gunnery, that even Sir Howard Douglas, who could recount with the utmost complacency the capabilities of Congreve rockets, Shrapnell shells, grape, and canister, seems struck with compunction at the contemplation of this last triumph of his favourite science. But a still greater discovery has since been announced by Mr. Nasmyth, who offers to construct a monster mortar for marine warfare, which shall lie snugly ensconced in the prow of a bomb-proof floating steam vessel, and on being propelled against a ship of war, the concussion shall cause an explosion with force sufficient to tear a hole in her side "as big as a church door." Now, I attach little importance to the argument that these murderous contrivances will disincline men to war, from fear of being killed. When cross-bows were first brought into use, the clergy preached against them as murderous. Upon the introduction of the "sight," to assist the eye in taking aim with a cannon, on board ship, the old gunners turned their quids, looked sentimental, and pronounced the thing no better than "murder." But war lost none of its attractions by such discoveries: it is at best but gambling for "glory;" and whatever be the risk, men will always take the long odds against death. But I have great hopes from the expensiveness of war and the cost of preparation; and should war break out between two great nations, I have no doubt that the immense consumption of material, and the rapid destruction of property, would have the effect of very soon bringing the combatants to reason, or exhausting their resources. For it is quite certain that the Nasmyths, Fairbairns, and Stephenson, would play quite as great a part as the Nelsons and Collingwoods, in any future wars; and we all know that to give full scope to their engineering powers involves an almost unlimited expenditure of capital.

Besides, war would now be felt as a much greater interruption and outrage to the habits and feelings of the two countries, than sixty years ago, owing to the more frequent intercourse which takes place between them. There is so much cant about the tendency of railways, steamboats, and electric telegraphs, to unite France and England in bonds of peace, uttered by those who are heard, almost in the same breath, advocating greater preparations against war and invasion, that I feel some hesitation in joining in such a discordant chorus. But when we recollect that sixty years ago it took from four to six days to communicate between London and Paris, and that now a message may be sent in as many minutes, and a journey be made in twelve hours; that at the former time a mail started twice a week only for the French capital, whilst now letters may be dispatched twice a-day; and that the visiting intercourse between the two countries has multiplied more than twenty-fold;—recollecting all this, it cannot be doubted that it would be more difficult now than in 1793 to tear the two countries asunder, and render them inaccessible to each other by war. But these are moral ties which I will not dwell upon. I come at last to the really solid guarantee which France has given for a desire to preserve peace with England.

If you had the opportunity, as I had, of visiting almost daily the Great Exhibition, you must have observed that, whilst England was unrivalled in those manufactures which owed their merit to great facilities of production, and America excelled in every effort where a daring mechanical genius could be rendered subservient to purposes of general utility, there was one country, which, in articles requiring the most delicate manipulation, the purest taste, and the most skilful application of the laws

of chemistry and the rules of art to manufacturing purposes, was by universal consent allowed to hold the first rank; that country was France. And it must not be forgotten that her preparation for this world-wide competition was made at the time when her trade and manufactures were suffering great depression and discouragement, owing to the want of confidence produced by recent revolution. And yet, notwithstanding this disadvantage, she carried away the highest honours for that class of manufactures requiring the greatest combination of intelligence and skill on the part of the capitalist and artizan, and the production of which is possible only in a country which has reached the most advanced state of civilization. Yet this is the people\* who we are told, will, without previous declaration of war, make a piratical attack upon our shores, with no more regard for the retributive consequences to their own interests, than if they were a tribe of ancient Scandinavians, who, when they made a hostile expedition, carried all their worldly goods to sea in their war boats with them.

Let me repeat it—if for the dozenth time—such an opinion would never be put forth, unless by writers and speakers who presume most insultingly upon the ignorance of the public. It really should be a question with the peace party, whether they could do a better service to their cause than by giving popular lectures upon the actual state of the population of France. And let them not forget, when dealing with this invasion cry, how the people were told, in 1792, that the French were coming to burn the Tower, and put arsenic in the New River, to poison the metropolis, at the very moment when, *as we know now*, the French ambassador was humbly entreating our government not to go to war. May not the historian of sixty years hence have a similar account to give of the stories now put forth respecting the intentions of the French people? But I promised to give credit to those writers for sincerity, and I proceed to answer them in that spirit,—begging pardon of every Frenchman who may read my pages for dealing seriously with such a topic.

France as a manufacturing country stands second only to England in the amount of her productions, and the value of her exports; but it is an important fact in its bearings on the question before us, that she is more dependent than England upon the importation of the raw materials of her industry; and it is obvious how much this must place her at the mercy of a power having the command over her at sea. This dependence upon foreigners extends even to those right arms of peace, as well as war, iron and coal. In 1851 her importation of coal and coke reached the prodigious quantity of 2,841,900 tons: of course a large portion of it is imported over land from Belgium; of this, 78,900 tons are specially entered in the official returns as being for the *steam navy*; a frank admission, in reply to our alarmists, that the discovery of steam navigation has given us an advantage over them. The coal imported into France in 1792, the year before the war, amounted to 80,000 tons only. Now in this enormous increase, during the last sixty years, we have a proof of the great deve-

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\* It cannot be too strongly impressed upon the mind of the reader that this cry of "*invasion without notice*" was raised when Louis Philippe was still on the throne,—as the following extract from a letter of remonstrance, addressed by Sir William Molesworth, Jan. 17th, 1848, to the Editor of the *Spectator*, London newspaper, will plainly show:—

"You say that 'the next attack on England will probably be without notice'—'Five thousand (Frenchmen) might inflict disgrace on some defenceless post; 500 might insult British blood at Herne Bay, or even inflict indelible shame on the empire at Osborne House!' Good God! can it be possible that you, whom I ranked so high among the public instructors of this nation—that you consider the French to be ruffians, Pindarees, freebooters—that you believe it necessary to keep constant watch and ward against them, as our Saxon forefathers did against the Danes and the Nordmen, lest they should burn our towns, plunder our coasts, and put our Queen to ransom? Are you not aware that the French are as civilized as ourselves—in some respects intellectually our superiors? Have you forgotten that they have passed through a great social revolution, which has equalised property, abolished privilege, and converted the mass of the people into thrifty and industrious men, to whom war is hateful, and the conscription detestable? Are you not aware that they possess a constitutional government, with the forms and practice of which they are daily becoming more and more conversant; that no measure of importance can be adopted without being first debated and agreed to in the Chambers; and that the love of peace, and the determination to preserve peace, have given to the King of the French a constant majority in those Chambers, and kept him in peaceable possession of his throne? Can you controvert any one of these positions?"

These writers must be judged, not by what they now say of Louis Napoleon's designs, but what they said of the French nation when Guizot was Prime Minister, under a constitutional king, and *when we were spending two millions more on our armaments than anybody now proposes to spend.*



lopement of manufacturing industry; but in consequence of steam power having been applied to manufacturing purposes since the latter date, the importation of coal has increased in a far greater ratio than any other raw material. Whilst cotton wool, for instance, has increased seven-fold since 1792, coal has augmented more than thirty-fold. This is a most important fact when comparing the two countries; for whilst the indigenous coal and iron in England have attracted to her shores the raw materials of her industry, and given her almost a European monopoly of the great primary elements of steam power, France, on the contrary, relying on her ingenuity only to sustain a competition with England, is compelled to purchase a portion of hers from her great rival.

In the article of iron we have another illustration to the same effect. In 1792 pig iron does not figure in the French tariff; but the importation of iron and steel of all kinds, wrought and unwrought, amounted in that year to 6,000 tons. In 1851 (which was a very low year compared with the years previous to the Revolution of 1848) the importation of pig iron amounted to 33,700 tons. And when it is remembered that very high duties are levied upon this article for the protection of the home producer, it must be apparent that its scarcity and high price impose serious disadvantages upon all descriptions of manufactures in France. But the point to which I wish to draw attention is, that so large a quantity of this prime necessary of life of every industry is imported from abroad; and in proportion as the quantity for which she is thus dependent upon foreigners has increased since 1792, in the same ratio has France given a security to keep the peace.

But there is one raw material of manufactures, which, in the magnitude of its consumption, the distant source of its supply, and its indispensable necessity, possesses an importance beyond all others. Upwards of two and a half millions of bales of this material are annually attracted across the Atlantic, from the Indian ocean, or the remotest parts of the Mediterranean, to set in motion the capital and industry of the most extensive manufactures ever known in the world; upon which myriads of people are directly and indirectly employed, who are as dependent for their subsistence upon the punctual arrival in Europe, on an average, of seven thousand bales of this vegetable fibre a day, as they would be if their bread were the produce of countries five thousand miles distant from their doors. Tainted as this commodity is to a large extent in its origin, it is undoubtedly the great peace-preserver of the age. It has placed distant and politically independent nations in mutual dependence, and interested them in the preservation of peace, to a degree unknown and undreamed of in former ages. To those who talk glibly of war, I would recommend a visit not merely to that district of which Manchester is the centre, but to the valley of the Seine from Paris to its embouchure, and having surveyed the teeming hive employed upon the cotton manufacture, let them ask what proportion did the capital and labour of those regions bear in 1793 to their present amount and numbers, and what would now be the effect of an interruption to their prosperity, by putting an end to that peace out of which it has mainly grown? Is there any object that could possibly be gained by either country that would compensate for the loss occasioned by one month's suspension of their cotton trade?

The importation of this raw material into France amounted in 1851 to 130,000,000 lbs. In 1792 it was 19,000,000 lbs.; the increase being nearly seven-fold. The consumption of that country is about one-fifth to one-sixth of our own, and it ranks second amongst the manufacturing states of Europe. But the quantities of cotton wool consumed in the two countries afford but an imperfect comparison of the number of people employed, or the value of the manufactures produced; for it is well known that whilst we spin a great part of our cotton into yarns for exportation, and our manufactures are largely employed upon common qualities of cloths, the French convert nearly all their material into manufactures, a considerable portion of which is of the finest quality. It was stated by M. Thiers,\* in his celebrated speech upon the protective system, that "the cotton industry, which in 1786 represented about a million per annum, represents now twenty-five millions."

\* National Assembly, 27th June, 1851.

(I have converted his figures from francs into pounds sterling.) If this be a correct statement, the value of the French production will be one-half of our own, whilst the raw material consumed is less than one-fifth. I confess I think there is some exaggeration or error in the estimate; but no doubt can exist of the vital importance of the cotton industry to the prosperity of France; nor need I repeat that it is wholly dependent upon the supply of a raw material from abroad, the importation of which would be liable to be cut off, if she were at war with a nation stronger than herself at sea.

The woollen and worsted trades of France are of a startling magnitude. I confess I was not aware of their extent; and have had some difficulty in accepting the official report, which makes the importation of sheep's wool to amount, in 1851, to 101,201,000 lbs., whilst, in 1792, it reached only 7,860,000 lbs., being an increase of more than twelve-fold. M. Thiers, in his speech before quoted, estimates the annual value of the woollen cloth made in France at sixteen millions sterling.

But if the rivalry between the two countries in worsted and woollen manufactures leaves a doubt on which side the triumph will incline, there is no question as to the superiority of the French in the next manufacture to which I will refer, and which forms the glory of their industrial greatness; I allude, of course, to the silk trade, on which the ingenuity, taste, and invention of the people, are brought to bear with such success, that Lyons and Saint Etienne fairly levy contributions upon the whole civilized world; I say fairly, because when all nations, from Russia to the United States, bow down to the taste of France, and accept her fashions as the infallible standard in all matters of design and costume, there can be no doubt that it is a homage offered to intrinsic merit. Nothing is more difficult to agree upon than the meaning of the word *civilization*: but, in the general acceptance of the term, that country whose language, fashions, amusements, and dress, have been most widely adopted and imitated, has been held to be the most civilized. There is no instance recorded in history of such a country suddenly casting itself down to a level with Malays and New Zealanders, by committing an unprovoked act of piracy upon a neighbouring nation. Yet we are told to prepare ourselves for such conduct in the case of France! Judging by the increase in the importation of the raw material, the French have maintained as great a progress in the silk as any other manufacture. The raw silk imported in 1851 amounted to 2,291,500 lbs., against 136,800 lbs. in 1792, showing an increase of seventeen-fold. In 1792, thrown silk did not figure in the tariff, but it was imported to the amount of 1,336,860 lbs. in 1851. These large importations, added to the supply from her own soil, furnish the raw material for, by far, the largest silk manufacture in the world.

Instead of singling out any other articles I will put them in a tabular form, including the foregoing, for convenience of reference, drawing your attention to the enormous increase in the importation of linen thread. I regret that I cannot include dye-woods; for, owing to the account having been kept in *value* in 1792, and *quantity* in 1851, no comparison can be instituted.

*Imports into France in 1792 and 1851.*

	1792.	1851.
Cotton wool.....	19,000,000 lbs.	130,000,000 lbs.
Olive oil .....	16,000 tons	31,000 tons
Sheep's wool .....	7,860,000 lbs.	101,201,000 lbs.
Lead .....	1,010 tons	26,100 tons.
Linen thread .....	601,500 lbs.	9,421,000 lbs.
Coal .....	80,000 tons	2,574,000 tons.
Ditto for steam navy.....	" "	78,900 "
Coke .....	" "	189,000 "
		<hr/>
		Total..... 2,841,900 tons.
Pig iron .....	nil.	33,700 tons.
	(wrought iron and steel)	
	6,000 tons.	
Sulphur .....	3,876 "	28,315 tons.
Saltpetre .....	270 "	8,673 "
Zinc .....	10 "	13,480 "
Raw silk .....	136,800 lbs.	2,291,500 lbs.
Thrown silk .....	nil.	1,336,860 "

I have confined myself, in the foregoing accounts, to the imports of those articles which are required for manufacturing purposes, because I wish to point out the extent to which France is an industrial nation, and also the degree of her dependence on foreign trade for the raw material of her manufactures. I have said, elsewhere, that whilst governments are preparing for war, all the tendencies of the age are in the opposite direction; but that which most loudly and constantly thunders in the ears of emperors, kings, and parliaments, the stern command, "you shall not break the peace," is the multitude which in every country subsists upon the produce of labour *employed on materials brought from abroad*. It is the gigantic growth which this manufacturing system has attained that deprives former times of any analogy with our own; and is fast depriving of all reality those pedantic displays of diplomacy, and those traditional demonstrations of armed force, upon which peace or war formerly depended.

The above tabular statement shows that France has entered upon this industrial career with all the ardour which she displayed in her military enterprises, and with the prospect of gaining more durable and useful triumphs than she won in the battle field. I have given the quantities imported, in preference to the prices, because the mode of valuation frequently makes the price a delusive index to quantity. I may add, however, that the statistical summary of the trade of France for 1851, published by authority, makes the declared value of the imports and exports amount together to 2,614 millions of francs, or £104,560,000; of which the exports are put down at £60,800,000, and the imports £43,760,000. But, that which I would particularly allude to, is the fact, that, of all the countries to which their exports are sent, England stands first. "Pour l'exportation, L'Angleterre se présente en première ligne." It appears that the exports of all kinds (French and foreign produce) to England amounted to 354 millions of francs, or £14,160,000; whilst the exports of French produce were 278 millions of francs, or £11,120,000, being 20 per cent. increase upon the previous year. I do not know the mode of valuing the French exports; it is evident that their prices do not correspond with the valuation at our Custom House.\* That, however, does not affect the question of proportions; and it appears that of a total of £60,800,000 of exports in 1851, England took £14,160,000, or nearly one-fourth. It might be worth while to ask the honest people who sold us so large an amount of commodities, what they would have to say to the five or ten thousand French marauders, who, we are told, are to precipitate themselves upon our shores some morning, and for the sake of a few hours' plunder, to convert twenty-eight millions of people from their best customers into formidable and avenging enemies?

But I must not omit to notice the part performed by the capital of France in the great industrial movement of that country. A most interesting report upon the manufactures of Paris, by my esteemed friend M. H. race Say, has been published, and for which he has received the statistical medal of the Academy of Sciences. It appears that its population has doubled since 1793, and that, including its faubourgs, it contains at present 1,200,000 inhabitants. Few people are aware that Paris contains a greater number of manufacturing operatives than any other city in the world. It appears that there are employed altogether in the various processes of manufacture in that city 407,344 persons, of whom 64,816 are employers of labour, or persons working on their own account, and 342,530 in the receipt of wages; of the latter 205,000 are men, and 137,530 are women and children; and the annual produce of their labour amounts to £58,000,000 sterling. It is estimated by M. Say that 40,000 of these workpeople are employed in producing articles directly for exportation. A war with England would not only interrupt the labour of these last, but, by intercepting the supply of raw materials, such as the wood used in cabinet making, &c., and obstructing the export of their productions, would plunge the whole of that excitable metropolis into confusion and misery. It is fortunate for humanity that the interests of so influential a community are on the side of peace, and we may safely leave the *blouses* of Paris to deal with the 500 French pirates who, in the imagination of the *Spectator*, were to carry off the Queen from Osborne.

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\* Our Official value of French exports to this country for 1851 is £8,633,112.

Having thus seen that France is, with the sole exception of ourselves, the greatest manufacturing country in the world, and that in some branches she excels us,—having also seen that in so far as she requires a supply from abroad of coal and iron, she is in greater dependence upon foreigners for the raw materials of her industry than even ourselves, I now come to her navigation; and here, in the facts of her mercantile tonnage, we shall find a remarkable contrast to the great developement of her manufactures; a fact which ought to give ample assurance to a maritime state like England or America against a wanton attack at her hands.

I give below an account of the navigation of France to all parts of the world, and to the fisheries, in 1792 and 1851:—

1792.					
ARRIVALS.					
8,229 Ships.....	799,458 tons	} Together 1,442,129 tons			
DEPARTURES.					
7,688 Ships.....	642,671 tons				
1851.					
ARRIVALS.					
9,175 Ships.....	942,465 tons	} 1,974,968 tons. Increase about 40 per cent.			
DEPARTURES.					
9,735 Ships.....	1,032,503 tons				

Thus, whilst, as we have seen, the importations of raw materials for her manufactures have increased in some cases twenty-fold, her mercantile tonnage has not augmented more than 40 per cent, or less than one-half. The increased tonnage required for this large additional supply of commodities, has chiefly gone to swell the mercantile marines of other countries; as the following figures will show:—

FOREIGN TONNAGE ENGAGED IN THE FRENCH TRADE.  
DEPARTURES.

*1787.....	532,687 tons.
1851—12,720 Ships.....	1,510,403 tons.
Increase about 180 per cent.	

It will be here seen how much greater the increase of foreign than French tonnage has been in the trade of France; a fact which, I may add, ought to make her statesmen doubt the wisdom of the protective system, by which they have sought to cherish their mercantile navy.

The return of the tonnage of British vessels entering inwards and clearing outwards in 1851 is as follows:—

INWARDS.	OUTWARDS.
1851—4,388,245 Tons.	4,147,007 Tons.

Our Custom House records for 1792 were destroyed by fire. But it appears that our tonnage has doubled since 1803. It is, however, in our steam vessels that we have made the greatest relative progress, as compared with the French. It was stated by Mr. Anderson, in the House of Commons, that for every horse-power possessed by the French we had twenty; and yet we are told that the discovery of steam navigation has conferred a great advantage upon France.

The strength of a people at sea has invariably been measured by the extent of their mercantile marine. Judged by this test, there is not even a doubt as to whether England or France be the first naval power. In fact, the French themselves do not question it. It is frankly acknowledged in our favour by M. Thiers, in his speech to the Assembly from which I have before quoted. Nobody in that country has ever pretended that they can, or ought to, keep more than two-thirds of our force at sea. Their public men never believed in the sincerity of our cry of invasion. One of the most eminent of them wrote to me in 1848, and after a frank confession of the deplorable state of their mercantile tonnage, as compared with ours, complained of the cry as a cruel joke, “une mauvaise plaisanterie.” Intelligent men in that country cannot believe that we think them capable of such folly—nay, madness—as to rush headlong, without provocation and without notice, into a war with the most powerful nation in the world, before whose very ports the raw materials of their manufactures pass, the supply of which, and the consequent employment and subsistence of millions of their

\* This is the only report near this date which I can find.

population, would be immediately cut off, to say nothing of the terrible retribution which would be visited upon their shores, whilst all the world would be calling for the extermination of a community which had abdicated its civilized rank, and become a mere band of lawless buccaneers; no, they cannot think so badly of themselves as to believe that others, whose opinion they respect, would ever give them credit for such wickedness or insanity.

But I shall be told that the people of France are entirely at the mercy of one man, and that public opinion is now powerless in that country. There is nothing about which we make such mistakes as in passing judgment upon our next neighbour. *Public opinion is as omnipotent there as in the United States, upon matters with which it interests itself*; but it takes a different direction from our own, and therefore we do not appreciate it. But it is quite necessary that the people, I mean the mass of our people, should be better informed as to the character and circumstances of the population of France. Teach Englishmen to despise another nation, and you have gone far towards making them quarrel; and there is nothing so sure to evoke our contempt as to be told that a people have not spirit to maintain their rights against the arbitrary will of a usurper. Now, no people have ever clung with more tenacity to the essential principles and main objects of a revolution than have the French. The chief aim of the Constituent Assembly of 1789 was to uproot feudalism; to found an equal system of taxation; and to establish religious equality and freedom of worship, by appropriating to the state the lands and tithes of the church, and making *all religions* a charge upon the public revenues; very many other reforms were effected by that body, but these were its leading principles. The abolition of the monarchy was never contemplated by the Constituent Assembly. The death of Louis (which I attribute to the interference of foreign powers) was decreed by the National Convention three years later.

Now, the principles of 1789 have been maintained, and maintained by public opinion only, with more jealousy than we have shown in guarding our bill of Rights, or Habeas Corpus Act; for the latter has been suspended whenever it suited the convenience of Tory or even Whig governments. But Napoleon at the head of his victorious legions, the Bourbons with a reactionary priesthood at their back, and the present ruler with all the advantages of a socialist hobgoblin to frighten people into his arms, have been compelled to own allegiance to these principles. Insidious attempts have been made to plant anew the genealogical tree, by the creation of *majorats*, but the schemes were nipt in the bud by public opinion, and *public opinion only*.

When told that the present Emperor possesses absolute and irresponsible power, I answer by citing three things which he could not, if he would, accomplish; he could not endow with lands and tithes one religion as the exclusively paid religion of the state, although he selected for the privilege the Roman Catholic Church, which comprises more than nine-tenths of the French people; he could not create an hereditary peerage, with estates entailed by a law of primogeniture; and he could not impose a tax on successions, which should apply to personal property only, and leave real estate free. Public opinion in France is an insuperable obstacle to any of these measures becoming law; because they outrage that spirit of *equality*, which is the sacred and inviolable principle of 1789. Now, if Louis Napoleon were to declare his determination to carry these three measures, *which are all in full force in England*, as a part of his imperial régime, his throne would not be worth twenty-four hours' purchase; and nobody knows this better than he and they who surround him. I am penning these pages in a maritime county. Stretching from the sea, right across to the verge of the next county, and embracing great part of the parish in which I sit, are the estates of three proprietors, which extend in almost unbroken masses for upwards of twenty miles. The residence of one of them is surrounded with a walled park ten miles in circumference. Not only could not Louis Napoleon create three such entailed estates in a province of France, but were he to declare himself favourable to such a state of things, it would be fatal to his popularity. Public opinion, by which alone he reigns, would instantly abandon him. Yet this landed system flourishes in all our counties, without opposition or question. And why? The poorest cottager on these estates feels that his personal liberty is sacred,



And he cares little for equality: and here I will repeat, that I would rather live in a country where this feeling in favour of individual freedom is jealously cherished, than be, without it, in the enjoyment of all the principles of the French Constituent Assembly.

Let us, however, learn to tolerate the feelings and predilections of other people, even if they are not our own; and recollect, we require the same consideration at their hands, for I can vouch from actual experience that the intelligent natives of France, Italy, and other countries, where the Code Napoleon is in force, and where, consequently, the land is divided amongst the people, are very much puzzled to understand how the English submit to the feudal customs which still find favour here. But I have never found with them a disposition to dogmatize, or insist upon making their system our model. I must, however, say that we are egregiously mistaken if we fall into the belief, so much inculcated by certain parties, that we are the admiration and envy of surrounding nations. Tell the eight millions of landed proprietors in France that they shall exchange their lot with the English people, where the labourer who cultivates the farm has no more proprietary interest in the soil than the horses he drives, and they will be stricken with horror; and vain will it be to promise them, as a compensation, Habeas Corpus Acts, or the right of public meetings—you might as well ask them to exchange their little freeholds for a *bon-mot* or a song. Let us then spare our pity where people are contented; and withhold our contempt from a nation who hold what *they* prize by the vigilant exercise of public opinion.

But the point to which I wish to bring the foregoing argument is, as you will at once see, that where public opinion is thus able to guard great principles which make war upon privilege of every kind, it is surely not to be despised in such a question as entering upon hostilities with England. Nobody, I believe, denies that Louis Napoleon received the votes of a majority of the French people. In the election which took place for the presidency, when he was supported by three-fourths of the electors, his opponent General Cavaignac had possession of the ballot boxes, and there could be no fraud to account for the majority. With what view did the French people elect him Emperor? To maintain, in the first place, as he is pledged to do, the principles of 1789; and, in the next, to preserve order, keep the peace, and enable them to prosper. Nobody denies that these are the objects desired by France. Yet we are told that he will, regardless of public opinion, plunge the country into war. The same parties who make this charge accuse him of keeping up the  $4\frac{1}{2}$  per cents. to 105, by all sorts of nefarious means, in order to maintain an artificial show of prosperity. And this same person, we are told, will make a piratical attack upon England, which would in twenty-four hours bring the  $4\frac{1}{2}$  per cents. down to 50, in three months to 30, and in three years to nothing! Last year, we are told, was very inimical to the *mental* health of the country, owing to the want of electricity: are these invasionist writers under the influence of this meteorological phenomenon?

But the army! The army, we are told, will compel the Emperor to make war upon somebody. I should humbly submit if they wish to fight, and are not particular about a quarrel, or a declaration of war, that they had better march upon Holland, Prussia, or Belgium, inasmuch as they *could* march there, and, what is equally important, in the combinations of a good general, they could march *back again*. If our government had any fear of the kind, it is quite evident that they would bring to our shores that immense fleet which is amusing itself in the Mediterranean, and which it would take at least a month to recall. There can be no doubt, if an invasion took place, and it could be proved that the government had expected it, that the ministers would be impeached. But they keep a fleet, more powerful than the whole American navy, a thousand miles off at Malta, and therefore we may be sure at least that they have no fears.

Now, as I have already said, the army of France, about which we hear so much, is not larger, in proportion to her population, than the armies of the other powers of Europe, with which she is surrounded; and, inasmuch as that country was invaded, without revocation, by Prussia and Austria, within the memory of man, it is rather unreasonable to ask her to be the first and only country to disarm. Besides, a large part of her army is in Algiers, surrounded by hostile tribes; and, by the way, when

that colony was first seized, we used to console ourselves that owing to that part of the army being liable to be cut off by sea, and offered as a sacrifice to the neighbouring tribes, we had obtained a great security for peace. But, in a word, every body who is acquainted with France (and they are unhappily in this country but few in number) knows that the army is not, like ours, fished out of the lees of society, but that it fairly represents the people. It is, in fact, 400,000 of the young men taken 80,000 a year from the farms, shops, and manufactories, and to which they return at the end of their service; and, such being their origin and destination, their feelings and opinions are identical with those of their countrymen.

The French soldier is anxious for the time of his service to expire, that he may return to his little family estate. The discipline and the morale of the army is perfect; but the conscription is viewed with disfavour, as may be known by the price (from £60 to £80) which is paid for a substitute; and anything which tended to prolong the period of service, or increase the demand for men, would be regarded as a calamity by the people. I have never heard but one opinion, that the common soldiers share in the sentiments of the people at large, and do not want a war. But then the officers! Surely after Louis Napoleon's treatment of the African generals, stealing them out of their warm beds in the night, he will not be any longer supposed to be ruled by the officers! His dependence is mainly upon the peasant proprietors, from whom the mass of the army is drawn.

But I must draw this long letter to a close. What then is the practical deduction from the facts and arguments which I have presented? Why, clearly, that conciliation must proceed from ourselves. The people of this country must first be taught to separate themselves in feeling and sympathy from the authors of the late war, which was undertaken to put down principles of freedom. When the public are convinced, the government will act; and one of the great ends to be attained, is an amicable understanding, if not a formal convention, between the two governments, *whatever their form may be*, to prevent that irrational rivalry of warlike preparations which has been lately and is still carried on. One word of diplomacy exchanged upon this subject between the two countries will change the whole spirit of the respective governments. But this policy, involving a reduction of our warlike expenditure, will never be inaugurated by an aristocratic executive, until impelled to it by public opinion. Nay, as in the case of the repeal of the corn-law,—*no minister can do it, except when armed by a pressure from without*.

I look to the agitation of the Peace Party to accomplish this end. It must work in the manner of the League, and preach common sense, justice, and truth, in the streets and market places. The advocates of peace have found in the peace congress movement a common platform, to use an Americanism, on which all men who desire to avert war, and all who wish to abate the evil of our hideous modern armaments, may co-operate without compromising the most practical and "moderate" politician, or wounding the conscience of my friend Mr. Sturge, and his friends of the Peace Society—upon whose undying religious zeal, more than all besides, I rely for the eventual success of the peace agitation. The great advance of this party, within the last few years, as indicated most clearly by the attacks made upon them, which, like the spray dashed from the bows of a vessel, mark their triumphant progress, ought to cheer them to still greater efforts.

But the most consolatory fact of the times is the altered feeling of the great mass of the people since 1793. *There* lies our great advantage. With the exception of a lingering propensity to strike for the freedom of some other people, a sentiment partly traceable to a generous sympathy, and in some small degree, I fear, to insular pride and ignorance, there is little disposition for war in our day. Had the popular tone been as sound in 1792, Fox and his friends would have prevented the last great war. But for this mistaken tendency to interfere by force in behalf of other nations, there is no cure but by enlightening the mass of the people upon the actual condition of the continental populations. This will put an end to the supererogatory commiseration which is sometimes lavished upon them, and turn their attention to the defects of their own social condition. I have travelled much, and always with an eye to the state of the great majority, who everywhere constitute the toiling base of the social pyramid; and I confess I have arrived at the conclusion, that there is no

country where so much is required to be done before the mass of the people become what it is pretended they are, what they ought to be, and what I trust they will yet be, as in England. There is too much truth in the picture of our social condition drawn by the Travelling Bachelor\* of Cambridge University, and lately flung in our faces from beyond the Atlantic, to allow us any longer to delude ourselves with the idea that we have nothing to do at home, and may therefore devote ourselves to the elevation of the nations of the Continent. It is to this spirit of interference with other countries, the wars to which it has led, and the consequent diversion of men's minds (upon the Empress Catherine's principle) from home grievances, that we must attribute the unsatisfactory state of the mass of our people.

But to rouse the conscience of the people in favour of peace, the whole truth must be told them of the part they have played in past wars. In every pursuit, in which we embark, our energies carry us generally in advance of all competitors. How few of us care to remember, that, during the first half of the last century, we carried on the slave trade more extensively than all the world besides; that we made treaties for the exclusive supply of negroes; that ministers of state, and even royalty, were not averse to profit by the traffic. But when Clarkson (to whom fame has not yet done justice) commenced his agitation against this vile commerce, he laid the sin at the door of the nation; he appealed to the conscience of the people, and made the whole community responsible for the crimes which the slave traders were perpetrating with their connivance; and the eternal principles of truth and humanity, which are ever present in the breasts of men, however they may be for a time obscured, were not appealed to in vain. We are now, with our characteristic energy, first and foremost in preventing, *by force*, that traffic which our statesmen sought to monopolise a century ago.

It must be even so in the agitation of the peace party. They will never rouse the conscience of the people, so long as they allow them to indulge the comforting delusion that they have been a peace-loving nation. We have been the most combative and aggressive community that has existed since the days of the Roman dominion. Since the Revolution of 1688 we have expended more than fifteen hundred millions of money upon wars, not one of which has been upon our own shores, or in defence of our hearths and homes. "For so it is," says a not unfriendly foreign critic,† "other nations fight on or near their own territory; the English everywhere." From the time of old *Froissart*, who, when he found himself on the English coast, exclaimed that he was among a people who "loved war better than peace, and where strangers were well received," down to the day of our amiable and admiring visitor, the author of the *Sketch Book*, who, in his pleasant description of *John Bull*, has portrayed him as always fumbling for his cudgel whenever a quarrel arose among his neighbours, this pugnacious propensity has been invariably recognised by those who have studied our national character. It reveals itself in our historical favourites, in the popularity of the mad-cap Richard, Henry of Agincourt, the belligerent Chatham, and those monarchs and statesmen who have been most famous for their warlike achievements. It is displayed in our fondness for erecting monuments to warriors, even at the doors of our marts of commerce; in the frequent memorials of our battles, in the names of bridges, streets, and omnibuses: but above all in the display which public opinion tolerates in our metropolitan cathedral, whose walls are decorated with bas-reliefs of battle scenes, of storming of towns, and charges of bayonets, where horses and riders, ships, cannon, and musketry, realise by turns, in a Christian temple, the fierce struggle of the siege and the battle field. I have visited, I believe, all the great Christian temples in the capitals of Europe; but my memory fails me, if I saw anything to compare with it. Mr. Layard has brought us some very similar works of art from Nineveh, but he has not informed us that they were found in Christian churches.

\* Mr. Kay, in his valuable work on the education and social condition of the people of the continent, offers this sad reflection in speaking of the state of things at home:—"Where the aristocracy is richer and more powerful than that of any other country in the world, the poor are more oppressed, more pauperised, more numerous in comparison to the other classes, more irreligious, and very much worse educated than the poor of any other European nation, solely excepting uncivilised Russia and Turkey, enslaved Italy, misgoverned Portugal, and revolutionised Spain."

† A Residence at the Court of London, by Richard Rush, Minister from the United States.

Nor must we throw upon the aristocracy the entire blame of our wars. An aristocracy never governs a people by opposing their ruling instincts. In Athens, a lively and elegant fancy was gratified with the beautiful in art; in Genoa and Venice, where the population were at first without territory, and consequently where commerce was the only resource, the path to power was on the deck of their merchantmen, or on 'Change. In England, where a people possessing a powerful physical organisation, and an unequalled energy of character, were ready for projects of daring and enterprise, an aristocracy perverted these qualities to a century of constantly recurring wars. The peace party of our day must endeavour to turn this very energy to good account, in the same spirit in which Clarkson converted a nation of man-stealers into a society of determined abolitionists. Far from wishing to destroy the energy, or even the combativeness, which has made us such fit instruments for the battle-field, we shall require those qualities for abating the spirit of war, and correcting the numberless moral evils from which society is suffering. Are not our people uneducated? juvenile delinquents uncared for? Does not drunkenness still reel through our streets? Have we not to battle with vice, crime, and their parent, ignorance, in every form? And may not even charity display as great energy and courage in saving life, as was ever put forth in its destruction?

A famine fell upon nearly one-half of a great nation. The whole world hastened to contribute money and food. But a few courageous men left their homes in Middlesex and Surrey, and penetrated to the remotest glens and bogs of the west coast of the stricken island, to administer relief with their own hands. They found themselves, not merely in the valley of the shadow of death—that would be but an imperfect image—they were in the charnel-house of a nation. Never, since the 11th century, did pestilence, the gaunt handmaid of famine, glean so rich a harvest. In the midst of a scene, which no field of battle ever equalled in danger, in the number of its slain, or the sufferings of the surviving, these brave men moved as calm and undismayed as though they had been in their own homes. The population sunk so fast that the living could not bury the dead; half-interred bodies protruded from the gaping graves; often the wife died in the midst of her starving children, whilst the husband lay a festering corpse by her side. Into the midst of these horrors did our heroes penetrate, dragging the dead from the living with their own hands, raising the head of famishing infancy, and pouring nourishment into parched lips from which shot fever-flames more deadly than a volley of musketry. Here was courage! No music strung the nerves; no smoke obscured the imminent danger; no thunder of artillery deadened the senses. It was cool self possession and resolute will; calculated risk and heroic resignation. And who were these brave men? To what "gallant" corps did they belong? Were they of the horse, foot, or artillery force? They were Quakers, from Clapham and Kingston! If you would know what heroic actions they performed, you must inquire from those who witnessed them. You will not find them recorded in the volume of Reports published by themselves,—for Quakers write no bulletins of their victories.

Will you pardon me if, before I lay down my pen, I so far presume upon your forbearance as to express a doubt whether the eagerness with which the topic of the Duke of Wellington's career was so generally selected for pulpit manifestations was calculated to enhance the influence of ministers of the Gospel, or promote the interests of Christianity itself. Your case and that of public men are very dissimilar. The mere politician may plead the excuse, if he yields to the excitement of the day, that he lives and moves and has his being in the popular temper of the times. Flung as he is in the mid-current of passing events, he must swim with the stream, or be left upon its banks; for few have the strength or courage to breast the rising wave of public feeling or passion. How different is your case! Set apart for the contemplation and promotion of eternal and unchanging principles of benevolence, peace, and charity, public opinion would not only tolerate but applaud your abstinence from all displays where martial enthusiasm and hostile passions are called into activity. But a far higher sanction than public opinion is to be found for such a course. When the Master whom you especially serve, and whose example and precepts are the sole credentials of your faith, mingled in the affairs of this life, it was not to join in the exaltation of military genius, or share in the warlike triumphs



of nation over nation but to preach "Peace on EARTH and good will toward MEN." Can the humblest layman err, if, in addressing the loftiest dignitary of the Christian Church, he say, "GO THOU, AND DO LIKEWISE?"

I remain, yours,

To the Rev. \_\_\_\_\_

R. CORDEN.

P.S. From a great number of extracts which I had thrown aside, I must add one from a speech delivered by Mr. Windham, the leading man of the Whig seceders, who became Pitt's Secretary at War. It was delivered on the 1st February, 1798, the day on which war was declared by France, but before that event was known here.—*"He agreed that in all probability the French had no wish at this moment to go to war with this country, as they were not yet ready to do so; their object seemed to be to take all Europe in detail, and we might be reserved to be the last."* Here the whole case as against ourselves is fully admitted by one of the most determined advocates of the war. It is needless to add, that if we were justified in going to war because *we predicted* that France would attack us at some future time, there never need be a want of justification for a war.

THE END.